

The Fame of Miyajima

Spirituality. Commodification and

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Abstract

My thesis questions common assumptions that mass production and distribution diminishes the spiritual power of objects. The rice scoop (shamoji) provides a case study of a material form which functions as a vehicle of spiritual power in Japan. The shamoji is much more than a mere kitchen utensil. It is also a recognised national symbol linked with changing ideas concerning rice, feminine gender roles and spirituality. Moreover, as an idiom the shamoji has many unrecognised consequences. Seventy percent of all shamoji in Japan are distributed via Miyajima, a small island located Southwest of Hiroshima in the Japanese Inland Sea. An ethnographic investigation, firstly, explores the ramifications of shamoji for different groups involved in its production, distribution and consumption on the island. Secondly, an analysis of consumption of shamoji among various segments of urban Japanese provides insights into religious and social practices in the domestic and public domains of life. I argue that the commodification of shamoji and their increased distribution to major cities via multiple distribution networks does not diminish their spiritual power. Instead, this process enhances their spirituality, spreading the fame of Miyajima and its shamoji.

My work addresses issues such as the impact of commercialisation upon religious forms, the way spirituality is embodied in material culture and the link between formal religion and the everyday life of the household. The core contribution of this study is to rethink the embodiment of spirituality in the context of modernity and mass consumption and the role industrially produced and commercially distributed commodities play in the democratic distribution of spiritual power. Unlike previous studies, my thesis presents a more comprehensive example directly entering the world of 'the tourist trade of souvenirs' and 'the arena of women and everyday domestic consumption'. Within these contexts assumptions about the dissipation of spirituality are much more entrenched.

Contents

List of Maps and Plates 5

Acknowledgements 6

Explanatory Note 7

Introduction: Trajectories of Spiritual Commodities 10

Section A - Spirituality and Commodification 34

- Chapter 1 Processes of Religious Embodiment – The Materiality of Spirituality..... 35
- Chapter 2 The Commodification of Spirituality - Wood, Stamps and Authenticity..... 63

Section B - Tourism; Consumption and the Movement of People and Objects..... 92

- Chapter 3 Producing and Consuming Tourist Space - Time, Space and Technology 93
- Chapter 4 Souvenirs: The Material Culture of Travel – Processes of Personification 127
- Chapter 5 Vocalising Souvenirs, Shamoji Discourses – Narratives about functionality 160

Section C The Locus of the Spiritual in the Domestic 187

- Chapter 6 The Materiality of Luck - Words and Things as the Loci Of Value 188
- Chapter 7 Souvenirs, Gifts and Good Luck Charms in the Japanese Home 210

Conclusions 238

Bibliography 250

List of Maps and Plates

Maps

1: Fieldwork sites in Japan	8
2: Miyajima.....	9
3: The free Miyajima Tourist Map	98
4: A cartoon map of the shopping arcade	135

Plates

1.1: The sixteen metres high Grand Gate floating in the bay	42
2.1: Shamoji are produced with machines in a local factory	71
2.2: More than 3000 flat, board-shaped shamoji are manufactured in the factory each day ...	71
2.3: Mr. Kikugawa and Mr. Fujii have invented their own types of shamoji	75
2.4: The cover page of the Miyachū catalogue for 1999	79
2.5: The iron Miyajima stamp	86
2.6: A Miyachū employee burns the Miyajima stamp into a shamoji	86
3.1: The Itsukushima Picture Map	100
3.2: Tourists have their picture taken in front of the Grand Gate	102
3.3: The Grand Gate on the wrapping of Miyajima Eclairs	102
3.4: Wooden plates engraved with the Grande Gate by Mr. Hirokawa	102
3.5: Shamoji-shaped price tags	111
3.6: Shamoji made of a variety of materials are on sale in souvenir shops	111
3.7: Pilgrims on a formal pilgrimage tour	118
3.8: Pilgrims visiting the Daishoin Temple during the monthly bond day of Kōbō Daishi	118
4.1: Shoppers hunting for souvenirs in the shopping arcade	133
4.2: Stickers link pickles sold everywhere in Japan with Miyajima	140
4.3: The Shamoji House	147
4.4: Joyful Miyajima	147
4.5: Shamoji signed by celebrities placed in an alcove in the Shamoji House	149
4.6: A shamoji with the handprint and signature of a famous Sumo wrestlers in Joyful	149
5.1: Shamoji linked with a variety of celebrities on sale in the Hiroshige shop	182
6.1: Enlarged shamoji with petitions are offered at the Senjōkaku Sutra Hall	201
7.1: An advertisement for a take-away service in Yokohama in 1999	214
7.2: An advertisement for rice toppings in the Asahi Newspaper in 1999	214
7.3: A typical kitchen drawers contains a range of plastic and wooden shamoji	217
7.4: Shamoji are among items that start a second life at a temple market in Kyoto in 1997.....	231
7.5: Charms repeating the rabbit motif are displayed on the TV	231

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Explanatory Note

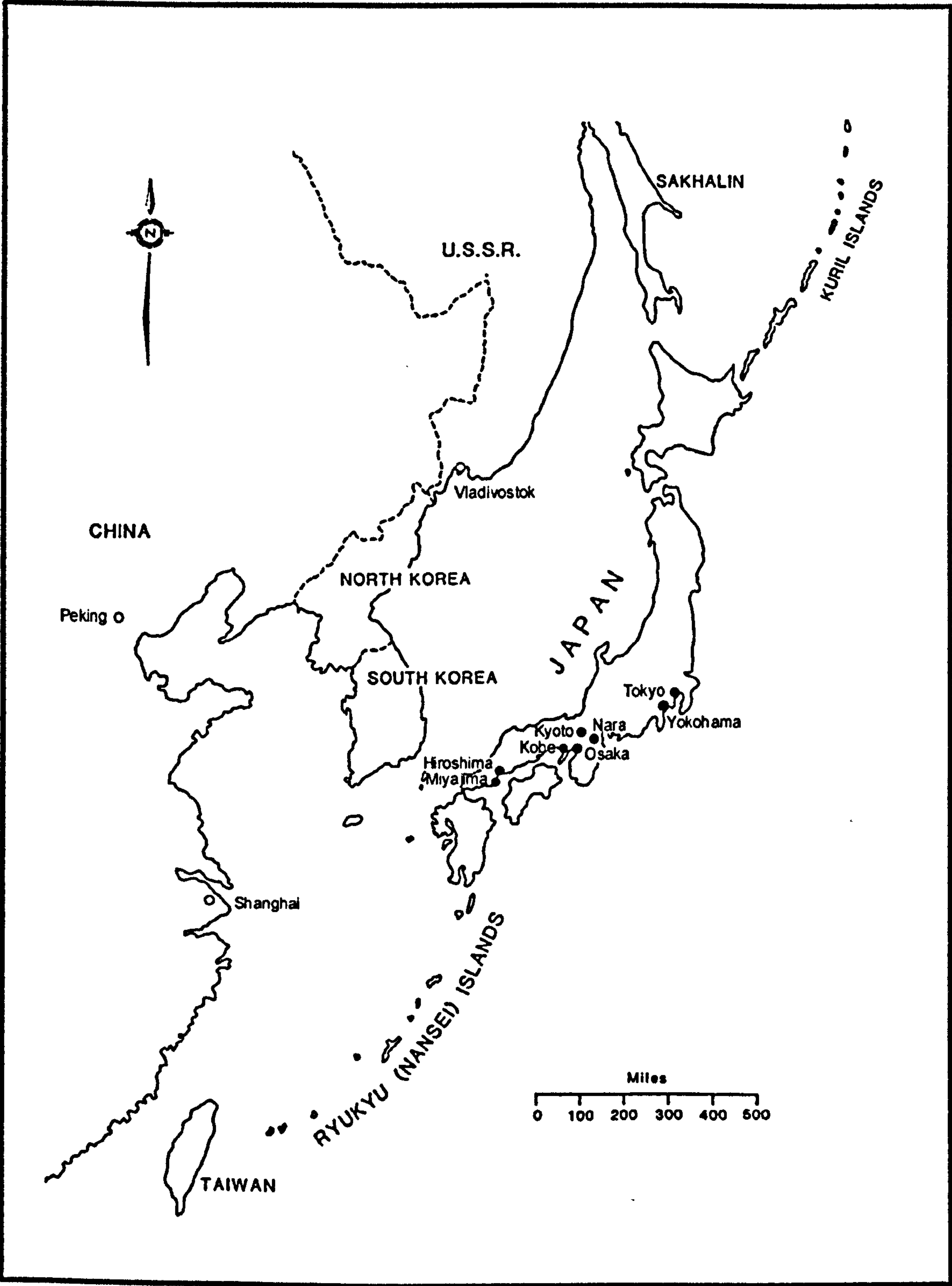
All Japanese terms are romanised in the Hepburn system. Macrons indicate long vowels.

Japanese words always appear in *italics*, except in the case of shamoji and words which have become part of the English language such as kimono. Names of cities and other geographical locations always appear in their English version.

I follow the Japanese convention for personal names throughout giving the surname first and the given name last. In some cases I have adopted the convention of referring to people by their surnames. The use of given names is limited to such a use by the informants themselves.

I have created pseudonyms for the names of most persons to protect their confidentiality and anonymity. Some people and companies have preferred to be called by their real names.

British pounds equivalents in the text have been calculated at £1 = ¥ 200 which was the approximate rate of exchange during my fieldwork.



Map 1: Fieldwork sites in Japan

Map 2: Miyajima Island. It takes only 10 minutes by ferry to Miyajimaguchi across the bay.

Introduction: Trajectories of Spiritual Commodities

- Nara, January 10, 1997: A giant rice scoop (*shamoji*) stands in the decorative alcove of the Nishinaka's home. It has a prayer for prosperity in business written on its head and a stamp reading Miyajima burned into the wood of its handle.
- Miyajima, April 22, 1997: To the beat of the drums eight young men, who wear blue coats with images of the Grand Gate, carry a palanquin with a reclining giant *shamoji* made of zelkova wood on their shoulders through the town.
- Yokohama, July 20, 1997: Inside a small hardware store next to the train station, I discovered several boxes filled with wooden and plastic *shamoji*. According to Mr. Nakamura, the owner, these are locally called 'Miyajima'.
- Paris, March 18, 1998: A wooden *shamoji* with the Miyachū trademark pasted on its handle is kept in the collection of Japanese tableware in the Musée de l'Homme.
- Kyoto, May 12, 1999: In the kitchen of a small noodle shop Mr. Yoshida scoops rice for her customers with a big wooden *shamoji*, blackened through frequent use.
- Hiroshima, April 24, 1999: Atsuko and I went to see a display of *shamoji* in various sizes made of different woods in the Tokyū Hands department store.

These fragments from my field notes introduce the diffusion (Map 1) and range of applications of rice scoops or *shamoji* in contemporary Japan. *Shamoji* are kitchen utensils used daily in most Japanese homes to scoop rice from the rice cooker into individual rice bowls. The unusual thing about the *shamoji* above is that all of them were distributed via a small island in the Japanese Inland Sea, Southwest of Hiroshima City. Miyajima is said to be the place of origin of approximately seventy percent of all *shamoji* produced in Japan (Map 2). The island is a sacred place and a famous tourist destination. This thesis will follow the trajectory of the Miyajima *shamoji* as it moves through space and time while spreading the fame of Miyajima.

The Material Culture of Everyday Life

Shamoji are part of the material culture of everyday life in Japan. They are kitchen utensils linked with food preparation, women and the domestic. Some of the common reactions my research project has prompted among academics in Europe and Northern America point to the widespread assumption that these kinds of mundane objects are considered trivial and as such they are not considered a serious research topic. Comments have ranged from amusement about the fact that I focus on something so banal to doubts about how this kind of study could possibly rise above the parochialism of folklore studies and contribute anything to the broader field of anthropology. Japanese scholars, on the other hand, have, generally, tended to take my topic very seriously. When presenting my material at conferences in Japan, for example, I was repeatedly reprimanded for not including this or that cultural trait of the *shamoji*. The reason for this should be sought in the fact that *shamoji* have been

studied by a number of prominent Japanese folklorists and are officially classified as *mingu*. This is a category of objects linked with the everyday life of pre-modern, 'ordinary' Japanese. Other examples of *mingu* are straw sandals, traditional toys and agricultural tools. Yanagita Kunio (1957), the pre-eminent Japanese folklorist-cum-ethnographer, for example, has dedicated a whole chapter in his collected works, to the etymology, changing formal characteristics and practices surrounding shamoji. Previously, Motoyama Keisen, another folklorist, had conducted a detailed pre-war study of folk beliefs and customs related to the shamoji in different regions (Motoyama, 1934). Both works aim to give the broadest possible overview of what the shamoji means within 'Japanese culture'. As a result, they are de-contextualised and a-historical accounts in which shamoji are depicted as relics linked with a more traditional, authentic way of life.

Studying the shamoji, therefore, brings with it a variety of pre-conceptions and assumptions held by Japanese researchers as well. Shamoji are ideally used to scoop rice with and it is this association with rice that has been repeatedly taken up by Japanese researchers who have criticised my work. Rice has generated an impressive amount of research in Japan. In recent years, some of this material has also been made available in English (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1994).¹ I will look at the role of shamoji in the domestic arena, but because there is not much to add to the existing body of research about rice, I have chosen not to pay special attention to the attitudes, practices and meanings surrounding it. Besides, my study aims to move away from this kind of research, which has tended to stress the uniqueness of 'Japanese culture'.

Recently, Judy Attfield (2000) has challenged the condescending views about material culture of everyday life held in academia. She addresses her critique primarily towards academics studying design who have not paid much attention to the part of a designed object's biography once 'it passes through the retail check-out into everyday life' where it becomes 'part of the disordered clutter of the mundane' (Attfield, 2000: 5). Attfield calls the objects that surround people in their everyday lives 'wild things' because

once objects escape the boundaries of categorisation they become wild, and like wild cards in a pack of cards, can be used to take on different values according to the state of play of the game (Attfield, 2000: 74).

¹ In her unpublished Ph.D. thesis, *The Making of Modern Culinary Tradition in Japan*, Cwiertka (1999) gives a comprehensive overview of Japanese language research on food culture.

Shamoji can be called 'wild things'. They are more than mere kitchen utensils. They belong to a category of objects that I call spiritual commodities.² These are mass produced and commercially exchanged goods that are neither sacred nor secular; they challenge the divide between utility and symbolic or aesthetic value. Through my study, I aim to show how a spiritual commodity closely linked with the banalities of the everyday can offer new insights into the objectification of social and spiritual relations. I am greatly indebted to Colleen McDannell's research into the largely ignored material aspects of various religions in Northern America. She illustrates how 'religious meaning can be derived from objects or settings which are theologically trivial, aesthetically superficial, and frequently grossly commercial' (McDannell, 1991: 382).

The thesis considers the paths of shamoji from factories on Miyajima to urban homes in the Kansai region (Kobe, Osaka, Kyoto, Nara) (Map 1). Tourism and wholesale networks are the two different contexts within which the Miyajima shamoji migrates. I want to propose that the commodification of shamoji and their increased distribution to major cities has not diminished their power. Instead, this process enhances their spirituality, consolidating their reputation and spreading the fame of Miyajima. A major part of the thesis, therefore, is concerned with how shamoji are employed in the creation of fame on Miyajima. This explains my choice of the title *The Fame of Miyajima*. I have drawn inspiration from Nancy Munn's (1986) seminal work: *The Fame of Gawa*. On Gawa, a small island belonging to a *Kula* exchange cycle between neighbouring islands in Melanesia, individuals exchange canoes and ceremonial goods in order to create the collective fame of the island.

Of course, an analogy between Gawa and Miyajima, a popular tourist destination in an industrialised, modern nation-state, is problematic. Whereas people on Gawa exchange inalienable goods with outsiders in order to create culture, the community on Miyajima depends on exchanges with the outside world for their economic survival. Through the Miyajima case study, I aim to investigate whether or not Munn's argument makes sense within the context of tourism and commodification, that is, whether alienable commodities such as shamoji may be employed to grow the fame of those who

² I opted for the term spirituality because I will deal with a variety of beliefs and practices through which people achieve a sense of the transcendent but which do not necessarily fall within the formal structure of official religions. A range of possible definitions of 'religion' is suggested in *Religion and Popular Culture in America* (Forbes and Mahan, 2000:8-9).

created them. My choice of comparing both islands is, secondly, based on the striking similarities between Japanese and Melanesian ideas about exchange and the relationship between the subject and object world (Mauss, 1967; Strathern, 1988).³ My analysis of Japanese notions of the self and the relationship between the individual and society, discussed in detail below, will explain this.

I view the production of fame on Miyajima as a dialectical process of creation between subjects and objects. I base my argument on anthropological theories of objectification as formulated by Daniel Miller (1987) and Alfred Gell (1998). These authors interpret culture as an ongoing process of objectification (exteriorisation) and sublimation (interiorisation) in space and time.⁴ In *Mass Consumption and Material Culture*, Miller (1987) argues that the term objectification

asserts the necessity for a particular kind of relationship between human development and external form. This relationship is never static, but always a process of becoming, which cannot be reduced to either of its component parts: subject and object (Miller, 1987: 33)

Miller sees consumption as the main arena of identity creation in modern, industrialised societies. He depicts consumers as active agents in the appropriation of goods employed in the construction of the self. In *Art and Agency*, Alfred Gell (1998) advances Miller's theory of objectification by focusing more on the objects concerned. In his view (Gell, 1998), all aesthetic forms are objectifications of their creators' minds which are endowed with social agency and which try to entrap others into exchanges with them.

The main question guiding the thesis is whether or not commodification diminishes the spiritual power of objects. A large body of research about commodity chains and Tambiah's (1984) case study about the circulation of Buddhist amulets in Thailand have been my main orientations in formulating an answer to this question. Both will be discussed in detail below.

³ Another point, of course, is their physical proximity.

⁴ Both scholars draw on Munn's (1996) work about Gawa in formulating their own theory of objectification.

Spiritual Commodity Chains

I will reconstruct the social life of the Miyajima shamoji. This approach will enable me to give similar importance to its production, distribution and consumption phase. The biography of a thing approach was introduced by Arjun Appadurai in *The Social Life of Things* (Appadurai, 1986). In this edited volume, Appadurai and Kopytoff (1986) demonstrate that although objects are loaded with a certain potential during their production, they can, when moving through different social contexts, divert from their expected paths. A related body of literature that concerns itself with commodity chains has also inspired my study. This research tradition demonstrates that social and economic processes are united in the commodity, and therefore the entire sequence of production, distribution, retail and consumption needs to be studied together (Watts, 1999: 312). My investigation into the life of shamoji synthesizes the approaches presented in the following two books. Firstly, in *The World of Consumption*, the geographers Fine and Leopold (1993) propose a focus on the vertical system of the provisioning of a particular good. They argue that different sets of cultural and material practices involved in each phase of the chain of provisioning - production, distribution and consumption and also marketing, advertisement and financing - should be studied (Fine and Leopold, 1993: 33). *The Story of the Sony Walkman* (du Gay, Hall, and others, 1997) is another significant point of reference for my research. The authors of this volume identify a circuit of dynamic articulation between five cultural processes, namely, representation, identity creation, production, consumption and regulation. They argue for the totality of this process since each of its aspects is defined in part by its relationship to the others.

I will compare 'The Story of the Shamoji' with the findings of the above-mentioned study about the Sony Walkman and aim to reveal the complex dynamics of the specific system of the provisioning of Miyajima shamoji. However, my study is grounded in ethnographic fieldwork and differs from the above two approaches which are based on a macro-perspective. Following on from previous work about commodity chains, my study will follow one particular commodity all the way into the home. I will provide evidence that in the domestic arena the meanings and practices surrounding the shamoji become more complex and more diverse. A point on which I disagree with Fine and Leopold (1993) is where they have made too much of the distinctive logic that is supposed to rule the whole system of provisioning of one particular commodity. Instead, I propose that the various phases of the commodity chain should be perceived as more autonomous stages; that is to say, what happens to shamoji in

their consumption is not merely a product of the previous stages of production and distribution, while in turn distribution is not entirely determined by production.

My data suggest that objects retain a certain kind of independence when they move through the chain. This autonomy is grounded in their physical attributes, which gives them a presence and agency beyond their mere place in this trajectory. Attfield (2000) has questioned the assumption that meanings can only be given to goods through human actions. She stresses that we need to focus on the specific material properties of things if we want to study the dynamic relationship between people and things (Attfield, 2000: 137). A number of recent ethnographies that focus on the specificity of the inter-relationship between people and objects in Zimbabwe (Burke, 1996), eastern Indonesia (Keane, 1997) and Ecuador (Colleredo-Mansfield, 1999) have pointed out that we can not reduce objects to arbitrary signs. Instead, through their physical properties, such as shape, flavour, size, weight, odour, luminosity and so forth and so on, things can also have agency. In Keane's words:

The multiple uses, mobility, and durability of objects allow them to extend the agency of their producers and original transactors. But the same properties entail the possibility that they will become detached from their transactors altogether (Keane, 1997: 75)

This thesis will attempt a detailed analysis of the materiality of shamoji and illustrates the specificity of embodied practices associated with them. I will, thereby, explore the creative play between processes of reification whereby people are given object-like qualities and personification whereby objects are treated like people.

This study is also different from previous research conducted about commodity chains because of the particularity of the commodity concerned. Shamoji are spiritual commodities that challenge the divide between the material and the spiritual worlds. There is a particularly close association between my research about Miyajima shamoji and Stanley Tambiah's (1984) anthropological study about the circulation of Buddhist amulets in Thailand. This work has been a second major influence on my project. Buddhist amulets are invested with the charisma of famous virtuous monks living in the mountains and travel to urban areas where they enter the context of commercial exchange and profit. My study shows a similar mediation of power from the periphery to urban centres, with the exception

that Miyajima shamoji are commercially produced and distributed nation-wide through tourism and modern wholesale distribution networks.

In the Thai case study (Tambiah, 1984) amulets are appropriated by the elite to strengthen the political centre in a highly stratified society. Starrett (1995), similarly, demonstrates how religious commodities play an important role in the political economy in Cairo. He shows that the negative attitude towards commodities imprinted with sacred words among intellectuals and religious professionals is rooted in their fear of the privatisation of public industries and the increasing power of the commerce and business world. Both examples differ from my case study because shamoji are commodities that are ordinary and cheap. Their spiritual power is accessible for an unlimited audience in the private sphere of the home. Shamoji bridge formal religion and everyday domestic practices.

A second important point made by Tambiah and of interest for my work is that it is predominantly men who collect amulets because they are the main competitors in the struggle for power and status. Here, Irene Stengs' research about the personality cult of the Siamese King Chulalongkorn in Thailand offers an interesting comparison (Stengs, 2000). In an unpublished paper, she argues, contrary to Tambiah, that Thai women are equally involved in the fervent collecting of religious objects with specific physical properties, such as cheap medallions and badges with photographic images of the King. My case study does not deal with personal amulets worn close to the body, but with kitchen utensils. In other words, shamoji are mundane objects predominantly linked with women, family life and the domestic arena. One of the questions I aim to answer is how spirituality is appropriated within the private sphere of the home. Research based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted inside people's homes is still rare. This is especially true for Japan and my thesis will, therefore, be a significant contribution to recent research about the material culture of the home (Chevalier, 1998; 1999; Miller (ed.), forthcoming).

Tambiah (1984) gives a general description of a broad range of different types of amulets in circulation, but a major shortcoming of his study is that he neglects to explain how these objects are actually meant to work. My study concentrates on the material properties of the shamoji which play a significant role in their efficacy as a charm. It thereby complements recent studies that have dealt

with the agency of religious objects such as Freedberg's (1989) classic about the efficacy of images, but especially Alfred Gell's (1998) more recent theory of idolatry. However, unlike both researchers, I will pay particular attention to the religious agency of mass-produced and commercially distributed objects. One means by which this agency is related back to specific Japanese conceptualisation is through paying attention to the more informal domestic form of spirituality, which is translated within the thesis as luck but is shown to have qualities that are in various respects distinct from the English term.

I will challenge the assumption that commodification reduces the spiritual value of things. This view ties in with two convictions that originate in the progressive development of western⁵ modernity from the eighteenth century. Radical changes in the manufacturing process and new ways of thinking about nature and the unknown (Sennett, 1977) have shaped the view that commodification has a disenchanting effect on the world. A second related thought was that modernity would lead to the decline - or even the total disappearance - of religion. In what follows I will describe the commodification and secularisation thesis. Both theories are highly problematic because they take as a starting point the notion that modernity is a uniquely western phenomenon associated with philosophical values of the Enlightenment such as rationality and the Cartesian split of body and mind. In recent years, social researchers have increasingly questioned the existence of a universal modernity. My study will, therefore, re-examine these general theories within the context of Japanese modernity. I will draw on the growing anthropological literature focusing on Japan as well as on the large body of anthropological work about Melanesian society. These latter studies made a significant impact in leading anthropology away from the influence of the Marxist inspired approaches of the 1970s and 1980s which tended to view culture as primarily located in production by stressing the importance of exchange relations in the creation of value. These are just some of several ways in which the study of this specific artefact is connected with wider issues within contemporary anthropology.

⁵For convenience, I will employ the term 'western' to refer to a diversity of people living in Europe and northern America. I am aware of the danger involved in using the 'West' as a single racial category as opposed to the 'East', 'Orientals' or 'Japanese'. Moeran and Skov have called this an example of 'counter-orientalism' (Moeran and Skov, 1997).

Commodification and the Disenchantment of the World

One consequence of industrialisation and the introduction of mechanised methods of production in northern Europe and North America during the nineteenth century was that an unprecedented quantity of commodities filled the world. At first, people were mystified by the variety of goods available, often sold in new venues such as the department store (Sennett, 1977: 10; Orvell, 1989: 185-90). However, during the second half of the nineteenth century social scientists began to question the advantages of mass production and mass circulation of goods. Karl Marx (1976 [1867]) is best known for exposing the negative impact of industrialisation and capitalism more generally. A detailed discussion of Marx's theory falls outside the scope of this thesis. However, a point of special interest for my study is the way he applied the religious concept of the fetish to the economic sphere in his attempt to reveal the value embedded in labour. Marx acknowledged that he took his argument from earlier studies of religion such as that by Feuerbach. In religion, 'the products of the human brain appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own, which enter into relations both with each other and with the human race' (ibid.:165). The term 'commodity fetishism' refers to the way goods in capitalist economies are, similarly, invested with mystical qualities while the social and economic relations involved in their production are forgotten (Marx, 1976: 163-4).⁶ The fact that Marx, in accordance with ideas generally held at the time, considered manufacture the main area for the creation of human value partly explains why he saw the circulation of commodities (or consecration of objects) as negative. My work aims to show, by contrast, that the circulation of spiritual commodities can play a significant role in the construction of value.

I am influenced by the large body of anthropological research about exchange relations, especially, those studies focussing on Melanesia. Munn, for example, also relates the circulation of objects to the creation of value on analogy with Marx. Much of this work in turn draws from the way in which, most famously, Marcel Mauss's (1967 [1925]) work about gift exchange challenges the Marxist productivist view while extending Marx's work on value. In *The Gift*, Mauss points out how, in more traditional societies, objects that are exchanged are treated like aspects of persons that are deeply embedded in a network of social relationships. Mauss's insights have been repeatedly used to oppose the inalienable, personal gift invested with the power of the giver in traditional societies with the

impersonal, mass-produced commodity idiosyncratic of western modernity (eg. Gregory, 1982). However, this distinction made between the gift and the commodity has also been repeatedly questioned and improved during the process. Appadurai (1986), for example, has pointed out that commodities can have gift-like characteristics and both are important in the creation of social identities and relationships. He agrees with Kopytoff (1986) that a commodity is not a fixed sign but a thing with a certain social potential that exists in all societies. Throughout their social life things can move in and out of this condition. Carrier (1995) has demonstrated the centrality of gift-exchange in the creation of social relationships in western capitalist societies. My study will demonstrate that Japan is an example of an industrialised society with a thriving gift economy. Gifting often involves the exchange of mass-produced commodities that play a prime role in the consolidation of social relations. The Melanesian literature is further pertinent because of the parallelism between the notion of personhood in both societies. The self is considered to be objectified and created through social relations (Strathern, 1988: 273).

A major question my thesis aims to answer is how commodification affects religion. The secularisation thesis contends that the progressive process of rationalisation associated with modernity will inevitably lead to the decline of the significance of religion in people's lives. It is true that the modernisation associated with rationalisation and individualism has led to a general decline of the popularity of traditional religions such as Catholicism in Europe and North America. However, these days it is apparent that religious structures have not been destroyed, but replaced by beliefs and practices better adapted to the new social and cultural situation (Stark, 1990: 207; Bell, 1997: 199). Before determining whether or not a society is secular we have to clarify what religion means for the people concerned. My Japanese case study will show that the secularisation of society is not necessarily a consequence of modernity. The Japanese religious landscape is extremely diversified and characterised by a high degree of syncretism. I am mainly concerned with what may be called the two 'established' religions: Shintoism, the indigenous religious tradition and sectarian Buddhism.⁷ Both have a long history of amalgamation in Japan and the result is a mixture of religious practices that cut across the boundaries of formal theologies. Traits considered intrinsic to Japanese religion,

⁶ Stallybrass (1998) defines Marx's notion of the fetish as an immaterial quality of the thing as opposed to the construct of the fetish in the colonial context based on its materiality. Taussig (1980) offers an excellent interpretation of the working of commodity fetishism in an Andean community in South America.

such as an emphasis on this-worldly-ness, the importance of practice and the private nature of worship, are commonly associated with the secularisation of western society (Bell, 1997). Any simple attempt to project this Western trajectory upon Japan, therefore, does an injustice to the very different nature of religious beliefs and practices there.

A dichotomous model that places the sacred in opposition to the profane is not a beneficial starting point for social science research conducted in any cultural context. In his detailed historical study of Protestantism in the US, Moore (1994), for example, provides us with multiple examples of this close fit between the sacred and secular aspects of life. He demonstrates that religion was sponsored by businesses and openly marketed as a commodity (Moore, 1994: 214-7). Moore's work would fit well into a more recent collection of essays that look at the interrelationship between religion and popular culture in contemporary America. Topics discussed range from religious themes in Madonna videos and the Christian rap music industry to sport as a religion and weight loss as a way to salvation (Forbes and Mahan, 2000). These cases linked with US Protestantism might be rather extreme examples, but the intertwining of religion and commerce, the sacred and the secular, occurs in all religions in all ages. Geary's (1996) work about the circulation of relics in Medieval Catholic Europe (Geary, 1986) indicates that these sacred objects imbued with special powers were exchanged as gifts and also circulated as commodities (Geary, 1986: 174). Hefner (1998) has demonstrated how, in pre-colonial Africa and India, extended pilgrimage networks doubled as trade routes (Hefner, 1998: 93).

Japanese religion has adapted well to industrialisation and commodification. Ito (1995), for example, points out that after the Japanese industrial revolution at the end of the nineteenth century, many deities disappeared because the reason for their existence ceased. However, other deities such as those linked with prosperity in business and good fortune, have gained in popularity (Ito, 1995: 172-3). My study will explore the supposed inverted relationship between sacredness and commercialisation explored through an analysis of the diversity of religious and secular practices involved in travel in Japan. Commercial activities linked with tourism are frequently seen as desacralising the site. Warner (1976), for example, claims in her description of the sacred site in

⁷ However, religious thought in Japan is also influenced by Taoist and Confucianist concepts. A small Christian community exists and numerous New Religions thrive.

Lourdes that the souvenir shops and 'bric-a-brac' threaten the spirituality at the greatest Maria shrine in the world (Warner, 1976: 311). The Miyajima case study aims to show that commerce and souvenir shopping do not necessarily make a place less sacred.

One aspect of this wider relationship that is highly relevant to the case of shamoji is the way that at the beginning of the twentieth century commodification and mechanisation have been associated in Europe and Northern America with inauthentic experiences. Moreover, in the same vein, technology is seen in opposition to religion (Pfaffenberger, 1992: 499-501). My work challenges this assumption because it will explore how modern technologies enable new, more diverse and personal modes of interacting with the Divine. Vasquez and Marquardt (2000) have shown how Catholicism has employed the so called 'tools of secularisation' such as computers and new communication technology to expand local religious messages on a global stage while reaffirming the authority of the church (Vasquez and Marquardt, 2000: 29). The success story of TV evangelism in the US (Goethals, 2000: 134-9) or mass-distributed video-taped sermons of the Word of Life Movement in Sweden (Coleman, 1996) are examples of how technology enables a more democratic distribution of power.

I will continue looking at the standard attitudes towards mechanisation and technology in contemporary Europe and North America, and Japan. This raises the issue of authenticity and imitation as central aspects of objects such as shamoji which are primarily distributed as tourist souvenirs.

Technology, Imitation and Originality

Bryan Pfaffenberger challenges the 'Standard View of Technology'. He holds that complex socio-technological systems, their key features being non-verbal communication and reified notions of the self, are fundamental to the reproduction of all human societies (Pfaffenberger, 1992:500). Pfaffenberger's argument is particularly salient here because he refutes two key assumptions concerning the disenchanting effects of mass manufacture. Firstly, he plays down the perceived differences between the use of tools and machines. Generally, handwork is considered to be more authentic and give more autonomy to the subject than the use of machines, which is supposed to be an alienating experience. Pfaffenberger makes the important observation that processes of reification whereby persons are given object-qualities can be found in all societies and that this is not only a consequence of machine use (ibid.: 507-9). Thus, he moves away from the view that small-scale

societies with traditional production methods are more authentic. A second and related point made by Pfaffenberger is that consumers play an active role in the appropriation of new technologies. In short, the meanings that artefacts come to have are not only realised in their production process (ibid.: 511-12).

I follow Pfaffenberger's stance in arguing that, contrary to Benjamin's (1969) view, mechanical reproduction technologies do not necessarily challenge or lead to the re-inscription of authenticity. Modern technologies have a particular set of practices attached to them that offer new complex possibilities to produce and reproduce culture. This argument is grounded in the notion that culture is an ongoing process of creation. Every society continuously reinvents itself and, therefore, each form of expression is always a copy of a previous condition, but also an original on which new experiences can be built. Bruner's (1994) work is of particular interest because he tackles these issues within the context of tourism.

Bruner (1994) aims to transcend the dichotomy between originals and copies, the authentic and the inauthentic by looking at the different meanings of authenticity within social practices. He challenges both the essentialists' search for the original and assumptions held by post-modern scholars that the copy is more real than the original (Baudriallard, 1983). Authenticity is not something inherent in an object. The construction of values is complex and reflects an array of different views, interests and power relationships (Bruner, 1994: 399-408). Another body of anthropological literature that deals with cross-cultural exchanges of goods, ideas and technology within the context of tourism has also questioned the fixed nature of value. Nelson Grabum's (1976) edited volume *Ethnic and Tourist Arts* was the first to point at the network of dynamic relationships between local communities of producers and consuming outsiders such as tourists, art dealers, critics, and anthropologists. Within these ongoing creative processes, authenticity should be seen as a culture-specific concept that can mean different things to different people (Grabum, 1976:1-32). A range of ethnographic monographs such as Jules-Rossette's study of the tourist art market in Kenya (Jules-Rossette, 1984), have expanded these ideas in particular contexts and placed the discourse about authenticity firmly within the nexus of production and consumption. More recently, *Unpacking Culture*, a collection of papers edited by Phillips and Steiner (1999) sets out to re-think some of the ideas expressed in Grabum's classic work. A series of articles argues that mass production and mechanical reproduction should be seen as a

cultural expression which can create its own forms of authenticity. Steiner (1999), for example, demonstrates that in the African tourist art market, value may be based on conformity to a traditional style (Steiner, 1999: 102).

A final influence on my work has been Alfred Gell's (1992) discussion of art objects in a manner which deals explicitly with issues in technology, originality and imitation. Gell claims that we are prone to express uneasiness towards technology, because 'technique is suppose to be dull and mechanical, actually opposed to true creativity and authentic values of the kind art is supposed to represent' (Gell, 1992: 56). In *The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology*, Gell challenges this negative view of technology by analysing art production as a technical process. In short, he argues that the value of art objects is associated with our ability to understand the technical production process involved intellectually. Thus, art works such as painted Trobriand canoe-prows and a statue by Picasso are considered to be 'enchanted vessels of power because the virtuosity of the artist and the excellence of the technical activity transcend our understanding (Gell, 1992: 46-48). This essay was published in the edited volume *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics* (Coote and Shelton, 1992) which aimed to formulate a method for studying art objects that would do away with value judgements and distinctions between high and low art. In *Art and Agency*, Gell (1998) re-thinks, polishes and improves these earlier ideas into an original theory of Art. The model Gell proposes forms one of the main theoretical frameworks for my study and his ideas will be explored in detail later.

How does the 'Standard View of Technology' that merges technology with imitation and monotony pertain to the Japanese context?

Japanese modernity is commonly equated with the government-led modernisation program introduced at the end of the nineteenth century. The Meiji government is said to have modernised Japan after western models. My work challenges the assumption that modernity is something that came from outside Japan. The basis for the Japanese modernist project can actually be traced back to Tokugawa Japan (1603-1868). The existence of an urbanised consumer culture backed-up by a quasi industrial infrastructure facilitated the shift from a mainly agrarian-based economy towards a modern capitalist economy at the end of the nineteenth century (Hanley, 1997: 15-19). Through a

discussion of the history of the cotton industry in Japan, Nakamura (1990), for example, provides evidence that eighteenth century Japan was a proto-capitalist society that combined craft technology with capitalist management techniques. Goods were distributed through a nation-wide system that centred around a network of rural industrial towns (Nakamura, 1990: 87-92). New technologies were allowed as long as they did not interfere with small-scale labour intensive production (Morris-Suzuki, 1994:34-5) and threaten the existing social order (ibid.: 54).

Japanese society might not have produced a Karl Marx, but continuous commodification and fast urbanisation prompted social scientists at the beginning of the twentieth century to question the rural exodus and the disruption of village life close to nature. Throughout his extensive oeuvre (1957), Yanagita Kunio, the founder of Japanese ethnology mentioned before, for example, has idealised the countryside as a traditional, timeless place where real Japaneseness could still be experienced (Yanagita, 1957). However, the ideology that represented rural people as the guardians of real Japaneseness clashed with the government-backed idea of progressive urban capitalism described above. In order to mature as a civilised nation, Japan had to embrace technology and strive for progress and, as a consequence, the countryside was looked down upon as being backward and uncivilised.⁸ Controversially, the State would later draw on the very idea that all Japanese have a similar rural ancestry to convey messages of homogeneity and uniqueness (Robertson, 1998: 29).

Objects used in the everyday life of Yanagita's (1957) rural 'ordinary' Japanese were called *mingu* or 'simple personal tools skilfully made out of necessity in the daily life of our fellow countrymen' (Iwail, 1980:2). In the 1920s a research method developed which centred around the classification of *mingu* according to the geographical distribution of their formal characteristics. This became the basic orientation for Material Culture Studies, called *mingu*-research, in Japan. However, isolated from mainstream anthropology, this field has become an anachronism. The majority of today's *mingu*-researchers continues to focus on 'traditional' objects that are surrounded by an exotic aura in modern Japan (Iwail, 1990a; 1990b). Yet some inspiring publications by individual researchers were induced by this research tradition. For example, Kamino's (1989) research about magical objects, Tanaka (1987) and Ōsaki's (1997) study of memorial services for objects and Kanzaki (1997) on

souvenirs. I will refer to these Japanese language publications and my study, thereby, attempts to narrow the scholarly gap between material culture research in English and Japanese.

In post-war Japan, the growing nostalgia for a more authentic Japan resulted in two developments which will feature in my work. These are, firstly, the rise of the Japanese Craft Movement and, secondly, the popularity of domestic tourism to the countryside. The association between craft, status and Japaneseness is a major theme throughout my thesis. I will draw on Moeran's (1984; 1997) ethnography of a Japanese potters' community in which he clearly demonstrates that the growing appreciation for folk crafts since the 1960s was directly inspired by the British Arts and Crafts movement. This study also relates back to my discussion about technology in that it shows that the flow of goods, thoughts and technology between Japan and the west should be seen as a two-way process. Another consequence of the post WW2 quest for authentic Japanese experiences that is significant for my work is the steady growth of domestic tourism to the countryside since the end of the 1970s (Robertson, 1988; 1991; 1995; Knight, 1995; 1996). I hope to reveal how rural areas that are perceived as more traditional create themselves as authentic destinations and how tourists consume these places.

Above, I have described how originality and creativity, seen as the antithesis of mechanical processes, are highly praised qualities in Europe and North America. The Japanese, similarly, see creativity and imitation in opposition. However, in this case the public discourse praises sameness.

Subtle Differences and Sameness

Imitation and repetition are frequently described as qualities intrinsic to Japanese society. Mathews' (2000) recent study about cultural identity in contemporary Japan, for example, illustrates how deep-rooted some of these assumptions are. In interviews with Japanese jazz musicians, it transpires that the discourse about the Japanese predisposition for imitation is particularly widespread among people in their forties and fifties. They repeatedly expressed the view that 'being Japanese is a barrier to artistic excellence' (Mathews, 2000: 55). The emphasis placed on conformity in Japanese society

⁸Conflicting ideas concerning the Japanese countryside and nature continue to influence the view of contemporary Japanese. Moeran has shown how nature and the traditional ways of rural people is looked at in a nostalgic way but at the same time are used to measure Japan's progress (Moeran, 1997: 212-3)

tunes in with a deep-rooted ideology that stresses the well-being of the group above the interests of the individual.

A large body of local and foreign research about Japanese social relations tends to portray Japanese people as striving for harmony and consensus within the group as opposed to people in other industrialised societies who are driven by pure individualism. The mass of books published during the 1970s and 1980s dealing with the unique Japanese enterprise culture (Murakami, 1979 and Hamaguchi, 1982), for instance, should be seen in this light. Some local interpretations of social relationships, such as Atsumi's work about informal relations in the work environment (Atsumi, 1979), have made substantial contributions to the study of Japanese society. However, holistic theories of groupism were far more common. The hierarchical group-oriented model of Japanese society has been eagerly taken up and discussed at great length by western and Japanese scholars alike. Most of these works draw on the Japanese anthropologist Nakane Chie's influential work *Japanese Society*, first published in 1970.⁹ Nakane argues that social relationships in Japan are modelled on hierarchical, vertical relations between small groups. However, it is often forgotten that she based her argument on data collected in Japanese companies during the 1960s. In that context, hierarchical paternalistic social networks were indeed significant (Nakane, 1970).

The discourse about sameness in Japan should be seen within the context of modernity. Tokugawa Japan (1600-1868) was a highly segregated society with four official classes. The extended family - the households of the elite excluded- formed an economic production unit, working either on a farm or in small shop or factory, with no strict gender division of labour. People had to obey a strict moral and social code of behaviour. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Meiji government abolished the feudal class system. The modern Meiji State idealised the gendered division between home and work, rooted in the patriarchal authoritarian family ideology of the samurai elite but also evident in western models of middle-class domesticity. This official gender policy, promoted by successive governments, has played a crucial role in constructing and sustaining the myth that Japan is a homogeneous society where everyone belongs to the middle class, where men are workers and

⁹ This volume was reprinted more than sixty times in Japanese. Moreover, it became the basic work for students of Japanese society world-wide. As a consequence it has been widely translated.

women are the keepers of tradition who take care of the family and where social relations are harmonious because everybody values the group.

These ideas have been indefinitely reproduced by the Japanese popular scholarship that stresses the uniqueness of Japanese culture called *nihonjinron*. The myth of homogeneity has, therefore, pervaded all levels of the Japanese population. Moreover, this view has shaped the research of many foreigner researchers studying Japan. My work moves away from these traditional approaches that stress the uniqueness of Japanese culture towards a more comprehensive understanding of Japanese modernity within the global context of consumption. In Japan as elsewhere differentiations are established through consumption activities. The ubiquity of uniforms is an example of how the public discourse stresses sameness. However, a closer look at high school uniforms reveals the degree of inventiveness with which students attempt to personalise their outfits through adding scarves, changing the length of skirts or wearing shirts out of trousers (McVeigh, 2000). My study, similarly, suggests that sameness still allows for subtle differences and symbolic competition through consumption activities. I will uncover different lifestyle choices in a consumer market highly segregated according to gender and age.

In recent years, a growing number of researchers who focus on consumption practices have argued that individual agency plays a far more important role in Japanese society than has hitherto been thought. Moeran (1996), for example, recognises Nakane's contribution, but argues that she made the mistake of interpreting Japanese social relations as constant, stable entities. He stresses the importance of personal networks of temporary, changing relationships in Japan and argues that the Japanese are just more 'aware' about the frames in which they operate and consciously adopt different social behaviour (Moeran, 1996: 267). My own research about social relationships inside the Japanese home confirms that Japanese individuals continuously re-invent themselves according to changing social contexts (Daniels, forthcoming).

Methodology

This work is not a conventional ethnography that focuses on one particular community or well-defined group of people. Instead, I have followed the trajectory of the Miyajima shamoji from the Island to urban areas. The data was collected through a multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1998) conducted

from January to September 1997 and again from March to May 1999 for a total period of 12 months. The major part of the research was carried out on Miyajima, where I explored the ramifications of shamoji for different groups. During repeated stays, I worked with producers, distributors and consumers of shamoji. A second part of the ethnography focuses on the distribution and consumption of shamoji among urban Japanese in the Kansai area (Osaka, Kobe and Kyoto). Because I have lived in Japan for five years from 1992 until 1997, many of my informants on the islands and in the Kansai region knew me for a long period of time before the start of this project.

The majority of the data presented was gathered through participant observation. However, I also conducted formal, structured interviews recorded on audiotapes. In the thesis, these recorded conversations are mainly used in the form of detailed quotations to show the contradictions and silences when people talk about a certain topic. They help to reveal the discrepancy between discourse and practice. I was able to take pictures on most occasions because the majority of my informants felt at ease with photography. The exchange or the discussions about photographs also helped in breaking the ice. Before the start of my fieldwork, I conducted intensive library research at the International Research Centre for Japanese Studies in Kyoto and at the National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka. The focus was on historical and folkloristic Japanese language materials which are not readily available outside Japan. I also consulted newspaper articles, tourist pamphlets, advertisements and other promotional materials covering the period 1996 to 1999.

My position as an academic linked with a well-known Japanese research centre, and later based in London, did not facilitate spontaneous participant observation in the early stages of my research. After my arrival on Miyajima, for example, I was first taken to the Municipal History and Folklore Museum to meet a team of researchers conducting extensive historical research about the island. These specialists were eager to answer all my questions and supply me with the data necessary to complete my project. It took a lot of patience and tact to explain that I preferred to engage with a broad range of people while living on the island for a longer period of time. Moreover, in the early stages of my research, it was common that locals would refer me to tourist pamphlets, articles and books about the island instead of answering my questions themselves. Other ethnographers have pointed at similar difficulties involved in conducting fieldwork in communities used to the academic gaze (Hoskins, 1998: 27-8 and for the Japanese case, Kelly, 1990: 78). Japan is a highly

industrialised society with a well-established academic research tradition. Moreover, knowledge is distributed efficiently through a nation-wide media network.

Ethnography is not only about collecting and analysing data but also about interactions and exchanges with the people studied (Jackson, 1989). The distance between the people observed and myself only faded after I began to contribute in some way or another to the local community. I spent a lot of time in elderly homes, kindergartens, schools, housewives chorus practices and drinking parties, answering questions, teaching a bit of English and talking an awful lot about Belgium along the way. Moreover, when it was suggested that my own story could be employed to spread the fame of Miyajima, I felt I could but agree. I was repeatedly interviewed by the media and transformed into a local attraction. A similar give and take situation occurred during my fieldwork in urban homes in the Kansai region where shopping for food and cooking and eating together with my informants were part of my daily routine.

I conducted research about shamoji production in four small shamoji factories on the island and in Miyachū, a shamoji wholesale company located in Miyajimaguchi across the bay. Because I lived in the home of Mr. Miyazato, the president of Miyachū, and a powerful figure on the island, my first explorations were in those venues that mainly produced, sold or promoted Miyachū shamoji. It took considerably longer to establish close relationships with the other shamoji makers. The Oda and Kigami family business are small shamoji factories where cheap, board-shaped shamoji are mass-produced. Two other producers studied each specialised in the production of a particular type of shamoji. Mr. Kikugawa concentrates on the production of high quality shamoji made of rare wood, while Mr. Fujii produces a wide variety of scoop-like utensils made of cherry tree wood. All shamoji producers were extremely co-operative in answering my queries during formal interviews, but also during more casual visits or drinking sessions. Only two producers allowed me to observe and take photographs of the actual production process inside the factories. The others felt reluctant to show me around because they considered these to be dirty, dark, and noisy spaces. Also, none of the workers operating the machines were willing to participate in the research. This example shows that however carefully planned, in practice fieldwork might turn out quite different. Advance planning is important, but it is even more crucial to remain open-minded without too many pre-conceived views

about what one will find once in the field. One has to allow changes to occur. This is one of the main benefits of long-term fieldwork.

The distribution of shamoji on Miyajima occurs within the context of tourism and souvenir shopping. More than sixty-three tourist-related shops can be found on Miyajima and I have concentrated on the retail of shamoji in these shops. However, shamoji are also sold and offered at religious centres on the island. I observed and interviewed religious professionals and lay people at the Itsukushima Shrine and the Senjōkaku Sutra hall as well as at the two main Buddhist temples, the Daishoin and the Daiganji. Because I was able to stay at the Daishoin temple complex in April 1997, I could observe religious practices related to shamoji first hand. I also participated in annual festivals held at this centre and was able to join local women on their monthly pilgrimage to this site.

My methodology in the souvenir shops on the island consisted of photography, participant observation and directive and non-directive interviews with the mainly female shopkeepers and a variety of tourist-shoppers. Conducting fieldwork in a commercial site brings with it the necessity of minimal interference with the shopping customers. This is especially true in a tourist spot like Miyajima where customers are continuously in a hurry and where the competition between shops is fierce. Thirty-two shopkeepers participated in formal interviews but most did not feel confident to let me observe customers in their shops. Many considered that asking customers questions was too forward. I was allowed to conduct long term fieldwork in only two venues: the Shamoji House and Joifuru Miyajima, and then only after the owners of these shops had known me for a long time. In Joifuru, my presence remained a delicate issue and I could only engage in participant observation. However, in the Shamoji House my role slowly changed from being a passive observer to helping out in the shop during the weekends. After I began wearing the shop's uniform, customers felt more comfortable with my presence. Often they would come up to me and start a conversation inquiring about my whereabouts on the island. Teenagers would enter the shop out of curiosity. In the end, it became my responsibility to assist foreign customers in choosing certain wares.

The group of informants that proved most difficult to interact with were tourists. Most visitors spend on average two and a half hours on the island. They are literally rushing through the streets to see the major attractions and buy a few appropriate souvenirs along the way. One can imagine that people

did not feel much inclined to have an eager anthropologist following them around. My appearance – Caucasian European and as such stereo-typed as only speaking English - did not facilitate this task either. I spent most of my time observing different groups of tourists at certain locations on the island. I managed to interact with a small number of tourists in a variety of degrees of involvement. Most of these were willing to talk briefly about their experiences on the island, for example when they were waiting for the next ferry or when they were having a cup of tea somewhere. A few people allowed me to join them during their trip around the island. This enabled me to get a better understanding of the variety of bodily practices involved in travelling on the island.

The second part of my fieldwork was conducted in major urban centres in the Kansai region such as Kobe, Osaka and Kyoto. In order to study the distribution networks through which shamoji end up in these urban areas I visited supermarkets, department stores, craft shops and other speciality stores in cities. However, the majority of data collected focuses on the consumption of shamoji in urban homes. I will compare this data from urban homes with my findings in houses on Miyajima. The reason for this comparison is that it will provide evidence for the thesis that proximity to the place of production and distribution of the scoop leads to the scoops being invested with meaning that is less marked in the homes further away. However, I am aware that this choice may lead some readers to conclude that my case studies merely exemplify the contrast between rural and urban life in Japan. In this interpretation, the countryside is depicted as a traditional place where the ideal notion of the extended paternal family continues to exist, while urban life is characterised by the pursuit of a more individualistic, western lifestyle. This division between everyday life in rural and urban Japan is actually blurred. A nation-wide media and transportation network has made the same information and goods available everywhere in Japan. New trends are diffused from urban centres to the countryside but rural areas are part of the same consumer society.

The private dimension of the Japanese home made it difficult to conduct research inside the house. I opted for a two-levelled approach. One part of the data was collected during short visits to fifty homes. I conducted formal interviews and took photographs which were, if people agreed, discussed in follow-up meetings. This general material was backed up with participant observation conducted while staying in five families, belonging to the middle to upper-middle class, with whom I had long-term relationships. Only through living in people's houses were the finer details of the material culture

of the home revealed. I mainly engaged with women aged between thirty and sixty-five years old who were full-time housewives. The results of my research are, therefore, heavily influenced by my family-centred sample. Growing numbers of contemporary Japanese are living on their own. However, within the context of the family, food preparation and distribution is still a chiefly female activity. This explains why the association between housewives as mothers and food providers and shamoji remains strong.

The perceived ordinariness of the home poses ethnographers with methodological problems. During my fieldwork in Japanese homes, questions about the different uses and meanings of shamoji proved highly unsuccessful. People would only convey their scoops with meanings after I prompted them. Similarly, my ethnographic investigation of practices surrounding shamoji on Miyajima reveals the significance of the performative, non-vocal characteristics of bodily routines involved in their production, circulation and consumption. This reveals the shortcomings of ethnographic research grounded in narratives. I agree with the Comaroffs (1997) who situate the equation of agency with voice in Euro-centric and elitist assumptions (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1997:48). Shamoji are taken for granted objects that are rarely talked about. I want to uncover what really matters to people, regardless of what they do or -in this case- do not say (Miller, 1998).

Summary of Chapters

The thesis is divided into three sections. Section A examines the impact of commodification on spirituality. Chapter 1 will look at the embodiment and transference of spirituality in objects and in the physical environment. It aims to reveal how religious agency operates within the Japanese context. I am particularly interested in mass produced and commercially distributed mobile objects which mediate between the sacred and the secular, the transcendent and the immanent and which play a major role in the democratic distribution of spiritual power. Chapter 2 is concerned with how authenticity is constructed by various groups on the island within the context of tourism and commodification. Discourses about nature, wood, tradition and Japaneseness will be explored from the point of view of the local community, national and international heritage authorities and tourists. The focus is on shamoji makers who may or may not draw on these views when they promote their wares.

Section B considers tourism and the trade of souvenirs on Miyajima. Chapter 3 will focus on how the local community employs shamoji to create and re-create Miyajima as a famous tourist destination. I am concerned with the diversity of tourists' practices in the commodified, highly regulated space on Miyajima. This chapter will analyse how the souvenir is linked with ideas about authenticity and place. It also attempts to define more general characteristics of Japanese travel such as the authorisation and ranking of famous places, the repetitive mechanical character and velocity of travel and the significance of souvenir shopping. Chapter 4 considers the souvenir shop as the main locus where locals and tourists interact. Through a comparison of two shops, I will analyse how the physical structure, the display and the atmosphere in the shop are employed in attracting hurried customers. Once customers are inside, shopkeepers play a significant role in advocating certain products on sale. Chapter 5 deals with the particular discourses shopkeepers employ to entice customers to purchase shamoji. Differentiations made in the shop reveal a pattern of age and gender related distinctions in the consumer market.

Section C re-examines some of the main ideas expressed in the previous chapter from the point of view of the home. Chapter 6 considers shamoji as tools to invite luck with. It defines luck as a more informal, domestic type of spirituality and investigates how the physical properties of the material culture of luck affect their efficacy. I aim to demonstrate that utility and symbolic values or the mundane, everyday and sacred spheres of life are intrinsically linked. In Chapter 7, I will, finally, deal with the consumption of shamoji in the home. It will transpire that in the domestic arena, the meanings and practices surrounding shamoji become more complex and diverse. I will attempt to determine why Miyajima shamoji may or may not be turned into significant domestic items.

Section A – Spirituality and Commodification

- **Chapter 1 Processes of Religious Embodiment**
- **Chapter 2 The Commodification of Spirituality**

Chapter 1 Processes of Religious Embodiment

The Materiality of Spirituality

1. Introduction: An Anthropological Theory of Idolatry

I have introduced Miyajima shamoji as an example of spiritual commodities. These are a category of small, mobile items, often produced in large quantities, which can easily be transported from sacred places. Through their mobility, spiritual commodities are set apart from the more stable sacred features in the landscape and man-made idols placed in temples and shrines. Chapter 1 considers the relationship between spiritual commodities and more durable forms of religious representation. I am particularly concerned with how spiritual power is transferred to mobile objects, and how they are considered to be effective at a distance from the sacred site.

The production and distribution of portable objects invested with the power of the Divine is closely linked with the historical development of pilgrimages. However, the extensive research on pilgrimage tends to stress the "rootedness" of the holy at the expense of its mobility. Instead, I will focus on the ways in which 'the holy can also be reduced and transferred from one place to another' while retaining its power (McDannell, 1995: 136). In his classic work on the cult of the saints in late-antique Christianity, Brown, similarly, argues that most studies focus on the movement of people to holy sites called pilgrimage. However, the movement of objects away from shrines linked with extended networks of exchange was often more significant (Brown, 1983: 88-90). This chapter focuses on shamoji that move away from Miyajima. A parallel can be drawn with processes of externalisation on Gawa, an island in Papua New Guinea as described by Nancy Munn (1986). In the latter case, static trees on the island are turned into movable canoes (Munn, 1986).

This chapter, which aims to elucidate how religious agency is attributed to objects, will repeatedly draw on Alfred Gell's theory of idolatry (Gell, 1998: 97-133). I will, therefore, briefly summarise his argument here. In short, Gell distinguishes between two types of religious agency, based on two strategies for attributing social agency to things in general.¹ Firstly, idols are endowed with internal agency through their physical properties. Human intentionality is considered to be located in an internal mind enclosed by a body. This image of the 'mind as homunculus' explains

why an idol is given subjectivity either through anthropomorphication or through creating a certain inwardness, for example, by drilling a hole in an object or by placing it in an enclosure such as a box or a temple (Gell, 1998: 131-3). Interiority, secludedness or inaccessibility is, therefore, considered to increase the power of the idol (ibid.136). My study will look at the notion of mimesis (Taussig, 1993) and the idea of containment as an animating force in Japanese religion. I will also suggest a strong link between things and words (Keane, 1997) as embodiments of spiritual power in Japan, but this theme will feature more prominently later in the thesis.

According to Gell, a second type of religious agency is externally endowed. In this case, religious objects are made secondary passive social actors through human practices (Gell, 1998: 123). In Japan, the relationship between the devotee and the deity is characterised by a range of bodily practices, such as offering money, praying, writing down wishes, and touching, clothing and applying make-up to statues and so forth and so on. Similarly, the physical movement of people through sacred space and the set of performances associated with it can be seen as a way to endow external social agency to the physical environment (see Chapter 3). In Gell's words: 'there is no definitive 'surface' and no definitive 'inside', but only ceaseless passage in and out, and that it is here, in this traffic to and from, that the mystery of animation is solved' (Gell, 1998: 148).

In order to elucidate the way the power in the island is transferred to mobile shamoji, it will be necessary to study the nature of spirituality and its embodiment and transference in objects and the physical environment in Japan. I, therefore, will analyse various forms of religious representation as they have occurred throughout history on Miyajima Island. We will see that the processes of religious embodiment on the island illustrate the degree of syncretism of Shinto and Buddhism in Japan. Shinto, literally 'the way of the gods', is a highly ambiguous term. It is frequently employed to refer to a diverse range of religious experiences throughout Japanese history, such as pre-Buddhism ancient Japanese folk beliefs, medieval localised religious cults that mix elements of Buddhism and Shinto as well as the post-1868 state-led religion.

In ancient Shinto beliefs, 'any form of existence that possessed some extraordinary, awe-inspiring quality' was considered a deity (*kami*) (Hori, 1972: 14). Natural objects, but also inanimate things such as mirrors, swords and later Buddhist statues or paintings were considered places where

¹Gell's (1998) theory of idolatry is part of his more general thesis about the way social agency is attributed to things. Gell views manufactured things as indexes of the agency of the maker, but also of the agency of their intended or non-intended recipients (Gell, 1998: 23-4).

the deities could materialise. After the sixth century, Buddhism introduced from China amalgamated with the native religious tradition.² Buddhist deities, represented in a human form in statues and paintings, were assimilated alongside the multiplicity of Shinto deities worshipped in natural phenomena. This was the start of a long period of amalgamation between Shinto and Buddhism, only shortly disrupted during Japan's militaristic period when Shinto was elevated to the sole state religion. Today, the majority of religious practices and architectural styles and deities worshipped at religious centres of both constituencies continue to be highly syncretic. Throughout this thesis, therefore, I will not make a distinction between (Shinto) shrines and (Buddhist) temples. These sacred places are what Grapard has called 'shrine-temple multiplexes' (Grapard, 1998: 215).

In the next section, I want to take a closer look at the way sacred space is constructed in Japan.

2. Sacred Places and Religious Agency

Miyajima was originally called Itsukushima. The etymology of Itsukushima has been traced back to '*shinrei no Itsukimatsurareru shima*' or 'the island where the divine spirit is deified and worshipped' (Sasama, 1991: 70). It is said that the awe-inspiring view of the mountain range on Miyajima from afar led to the establishment of the whole island as a sacred place. Grapard (1982) has attempted to define what ancient Japanese understood to be sacred sites. He argues that the site of residence of the divine is considered to be both the specific object in which the divinity is present and the geographical unit in which that object is located, whether it be a shrine or not' (Grapard, 1982: 197).

The terms *shintai* (the body of the Divine) and *yoshiro* (the Divine landing site) frequently occur in discussions about the spirituality of the ancient Japanese. The relationship between both concepts is rather obscure and they certainly merit some further explanations here. The 'body of the Divine' can be a mirror or a sword or any object, natural and man-made, with a striking appearance (Grapard, 1982: 199). Geographical features such as mountains or, in the case of Miyajima, a whole island may also be perceived as the body of the Divine. Trees and rocks found

²Buddhism has its origin in India with the enlightenment of the Buddha around six hundred BC. However, long after its disappearance in its country of origin, it continued to grow in a translated and adapted form in China. It is this Chinese version of Buddhism that the Japanese appropriated. First, the Japanese aristocracy absorbed the new faith, expecting the magical powers of the Buddha to enhance the power of the State. Several scholastic sects developed to promote Buddhist thought, but the common people merely embraced Buddhism as it amalgamated with the native folk traditions.

within the sacred landscape are often considered to be 'places of direct descent' of the deities (Minzokugaku jiten, 1994:298).

In practice, it is far more difficult to make clear distinctions. Mountains, for instance, were thought to be the body of the deities, their temporary landing place, but also the place where the souls of the ancestors reside. Joseph Kitagawa (1980), an acclaimed scholar of Japanese religions, cautions us that we have to keep in mind that the ancient Japanese did not have the same symbolic understanding of the world as people today. They believed in the mutual participation between man and nature grounded in their intimate relationship. Japanese classical abundance with images of nature provides evidence for this thesis. In the *Manyōshū*, the oldest anthology of Japanese poems, dating back to the eighth century, for example, the mountains are not only considered to be the dwelling places of the deities, they are the deities (Kitagawa, 1980: 29-32).

During the sixth century, the Mahayana school of Buddhism³ was introduced to Japan via China. I will discuss various forms of Buddhist religious embodiment below, but in this section I want to focus on Shugendō mountain cults, which continue to have a following on the Island. This religious tradition, closely associated with the local elite, which developed during the eighth century, drew on esoteric Buddhist theology and an immense variety of practices borrowed from pan-Asian mountain cults⁴ (Grapard, 1998: 219). For Shugendō cults, the mountains were the place where Buddhahood could be realised in this world (Formanek, 1998: 169). The mountains functioned like a mandala.⁵ In other words, secret geographical sites scattered through the mountains represented the natural sites of residence of the Buddha in the mandala. During ascetic training in the mountains, Shugendō practitioners performed rituals similar to those performed when entering a painted mandala. While moving through the landscape, their body became one with the encoded body of the Buddha materialised in it (Grapard, 1998:235).⁶ The spatial movement of monks through the mountain mandala also aimed to eradicate time

³In summary, Mahayana Buddhism teaches that, with the help of enlightened figures, Buddha's and Bodhisatva's, everyone can attain Nirvana.

⁴Such as Indian cults, Chinese Taoist practices, Korean mountain cults and Japanese naturalism (Grapard, 1998: 215-6).

⁵A mandala represents the residence of the Buddha, but it is also a representation of the original nature of our heart-mind, free of illusions and passions. While meditating on a mandala, one integrates 'the absolute into the relative, the metaphysical into the physical' (Grapard, 1982; 209-210).

⁶The mandala space first concentrated on sacred mountains in the Kii Peninsula, in central Japan, but gradually other mountains were incorporated. Finally the whole of Japan was divided into two mandalas. There was also a gradual syncretisation of the mandalisation of space. Certain Shinto shrines such as the Ise Grand Shrine, for instance, were conceived as mandalas (Grapard, 1982: 214).

(Grapard, 1982: 211). In her classic study of shamanistic practices in Japan Carmen Blacker, for instance, describes a weeklong seclusion on Mount Haguro in Yamagata Prefecture as follows: 'we had undergone death, conception, gestation and rebirth in the heart of a mountain which stood for a mother's womb' (Blacker, 1975: 233).

Shugendō mountain worship provides a good example of how Gell's concept of external and internal agency (Gell, 1998), discussed above, operates. Movement through and practices performed in the mountains attribute this space with external agency. Secondly, like a mother's womb, the mountains⁷ are considered to be enclosed, inaccessible spaces with a certain internal agency. Within the larger body of literature dealing with Japanese folklore, reference is repeatedly made to the notion of containment as a source of spiritual power. In his extensive oeuvre, the Japanese folklorist Origuchi (1940a; 1940b), for example, discusses hollow container objects without holes or openings that contain a living substance are considered to be invested with spiritual power (Origuchi, 1940a: 263). A detailed discussion of these objects falls outside the scope of this thesis; suffice it to say here that within the broader east Asian region container-shaped objects such as gourds, eggs and shells are coupled with ideas concerning fertility and longevity.⁸ Elsewhere, I have traced the iconography and etymology of the shamoji back to hollow scoops made out of gourds and shells (Daniels, 1996). Some Japanese folklorists (Yanagita, 1990; Motoyama, 1983) have suggested that shamoji, through their historical association with container objects, should be interpreted as homunculi. However, during my fieldwork, I did not find any evidence that supports the applicability of this interpretation in contemporary Japan.

During the ninth century Shugendō mountain cults became institutionalised in two esoteric Buddhist sects: Shingonshū and Tendai-shū.⁹ The founders of both sects, respectively Kōbō Daishi and Saichō, were two charismatic leaders who studied Buddhism in China. After returning to Japan each built his religious headquarters on a holy mountain, namely Mount Koya south of Osaka and Mount Hiei in Kyoto. Monks belonging to these sects combined their knowledge of the Buddhist doctrines with their understanding of ancient mountain beliefs. Miyajima is an important power base of the Shingonshū sect. Kōbō Daishi is said to have visited Miyajima during the ninth

⁷The practice of connecting contained spaces such as mountains, caves and the womb is widespread. Caroline Humphrey, for example, points at the use of metaphors of containment in fertility cults in Mongolia (Humphrey, 1995: 149-150).

⁸ In China and Korea, for instance, origin myths describe how the first human beings were born out of natural containers (Kan, 1983; Nakashima, 1989).

century on returning home from his religious training in China. He secluded himself in the mountains on the island which he named Misen mountains after the mountain range that, according to Buddhist cosmology, rise in the centre of the world. This is an example of how mountains became seen as 'the earthly representations' of the Buddhist pure land (Miyamoto, 1964: 51-53), a point I will return to later.¹⁰

Buddhist monks performing ascetic practices in holy mountains frequently perceived the image of the Buddha in sacred trees and rocks. Kōbō Daishi, for example, is said to have seen the deity Benzaiten evoked on Miyajima and carved her image from sacred trees in the Misen Mountains. Sacred places where the deity Benzaiten is honoured in Japan are commonly islands or places close to a river that are famous for their beautiful scenery. Sasama (1991) points out that this type of landscape is analogous with the image of Paradise in Buddhism (the Pure Land) as well as in Shinto (The Dragon's Palace). Wise men went into seclusion on these beautiful islands and filled themselves with the supranational power that is thought to bubble up there (Sasama, 1991: 62-66). Apart from Miyajima, the charismatic monk Kōbō Daishi is also linked with a range of other beautiful islands such as Enoshima, an island located south of Tokyo near Kamakura. This island also developed into a major religious centre dedicated to the worship of the deity Benzaiten. Another esoteric statue said to be carved by Kōbō Daishi is worshipped here.

The cult surrounding the deity Benzaiten which developed after the eighth century exemplifies the degree of religious syncretism in Japan. Benzaiten was originally worshipped in India as the Hindu female water god Sarasvati¹¹, but she is also the Buddhist muse of music, scholarship, and eloquence and a good luck deity. In Japan, qualities of the Shinto deities of agriculture and sea travel were added. Today, a leaflet distributed at the Daiganji Temple, where Benzaiten is worshipped on Miyajima, lists good luck, cures from disease, wisdom, safety during sea travel, musical talent and discussion skills among the benefits granted by the Miyajima Benzaiten.

⁹ Both groups have known a long history of sectarianism. In contemporary, Japan new religious sects like Agonshū also focus on ascetic mountain worship

¹⁰ Grapard illustrates how, during the Heian period, forty-nine caves in Mount Hiko in northern Kyushu were associated with the 49 chambers of inner palace of the Bodhisattva Maitreya while he waited to become the new Buddha (Grapard, 1998: 226).

¹¹ Sarasvati is the Hindu goddess of Wisdom and Fine Arts. She is 'depicted with four arms, holding a stringed musical instrument called a vina with two hands (symbol of the arts), and manuscripts (symbol of wisdom and learning), and a string of prayer beads'. Her vehicle is the swan for spiritual perfection and transcendence (Holm, 1994: 99).

Miyajima can be literally translated as Shinto Shrine Island and today the Itsukushima Shrine is the main tourist attraction on the island. The unique architecture of the shrine, first built in 1168, has been glorified throughout the centuries. It is the only shrine in Japan that rests on poles over the water, and it is viewed as creating a sublime harmony between the sea and the Misen Mountains in the background. The building can, therefore, be seen as another way to embody the power in the island or another attempt to give formal expression to the notion of Paradise on earth. In 1286, a sixteen-meter high wooden entrance gate was erected in the sea 160 meters in front of the shrine. These gateways (*torii*) demarcate sacred space. The floating vermilion gate became the emblem of Miyajima's reputation as a place of unique natural beauty (Plate 1.1) (see Chapter 2).

Today, the Itsukushima Shrine is one of Shinto's best known sanctuaries. However, its life history reflects the syncretism between Shinto and Buddhism. The *Nihonshoki*, a chronicle from the ninth century, explicitly links the female Shinto deity, Itsukishima, with Miyajima. It is said that this deity was probably first worshipped in the Itsukushima Shrine. At some point, the focus of worship shifted to Benzaiten, a female Buddhist deity. The Buddhist clergy draw attention to the fact that as early as the twelfth century Buddhist monks were responsible for conducting ceremonies at the Itsukushima Shrine, where several statues of Buddhist deities were worshipped. Sasama, an independent historian, supports the latter view (Sasama, 1991: 74).¹²

The government-led split between both religions at the end of the nineteenth century resulted in fierce anti-Buddhist iconoclasm. More than sixty percent of Buddhist temples in Japan were either destroyed or turned into Shinto shrines; statues and paintings were burned, many Buddhist clergy were forced into lay life, and the Shugendō mountain cults discussed above were abolished (Grapard, 1998: 245). On Miyajima, a large number of Buddhist temples were burned down and other buildings such as the Itsukushima Shrine, the Senjōkaku Temple Hall and the two pagodas were appropriated by State-Shinto. Some Buddhist statues were saved and moved to Buddhist

¹² It is thought that Miyajima was uninhabited until the end of the fourteenth century. Before the twelfth century, religious professionals who conducted religious services at the Itsukushima Shrine lived in temples opposite the bay. Historians attached to a research centre on the island question this view. They argue that depicting Miyajima as uninhabited an island is part of the discourse about the sacred site. In fact, human graves that date from a much earlier period have been found on the island (personal communication Okazaki, 1999).



Plate 1.1: The sixteen metre high Grand Gate in front of the Itsukushima Shrine is one of the most iconic images of traditional Japan.

temples on the Island. The statue of the Miyajima Benzaiten has been venerated in the Daiganji Temple ever since.

The history of the relationship between Miyajima and Benzaiten illustrates how various ways of religious representation followed each other on the island. The beautiful landscape with its mountains full of rocks and trees is said to echo the divine power of Benzaiten. Her power was inscribed in a statue made from sacred trees in the mountains, which was placed in a Shrine whose architecture is another manifestation of the power in the island. The way power is attributed to man-made objects such as statues, to which I now turn, is a key element in the understanding of how shamoji are supposed to partake in the power of the island.

3. Religious Embodiment and Reproduction in Man-made Objects

Above, we have seen how in Japan Buddhist and Shinto notions of religious embodiment amalgamated. Some of the earliest examples of this syncretism are bronze mirrors, worshipped in ancient Shinto as 'the body of the Divine,' to which small images of the Buddha were attached (Inoue, 1994: 306). The depiction of Shinto deities in a human form and the enshrinement of religious objects in sanctuaries only emerged after the introduction of Buddhism with its elaborate set of ritual objects, statues and architecture. In Buddhism, it was originally thought that the sacred power of the Buddha 'could not be adequately represented in a human form' (Holm, 1994: 31). However, during the second century, devotion became more personalised. The physical form and spiritual being of Buddhist deities became considered united in their representations. In other words, in Buddhism, each physical embodiment of the deity is the divine person. Similarly, in Hinduism, the all-pervading power of the deity is thought to be simultaneously present in a range of different embodiments, iconic and non-iconic (Davis, 1997: 21-3).

The transition from worshipping Shinto deities in natural phenomena and non-iconic objects to Buddhist statues in human shape occurred smoothly in Japan. The first Buddhist statues were imported from the mainland. They were mainly made of sandalwood (*hyakudan*), common in India and south east Asia. This is an aromatic, lightly yellow coloured tree of rather small size, which was also used for incense and medicine. The first anthropomorphic Buddhist statues made in Japan probably emulated living sacred trees. We have seen in the previous section that Kōbō Daishi, the founder of the Shingonshū Buddhist sect, for example, is said to have produced the Miyajima Benzaiten statue out of a sacred tree. A recent volume about tree symbolism edited by

Rival (1998) addresses the embodiment of spirituality in wooden objects. Rival points out that 'the idea that wood and wooden objects are 'alive' because trees are living organisms is widespread' (Rival, 1998:22).¹³ How is the relationship between living sacred trees and wooden artefacts made from them conceived in Japan? Sacred trees are seen as 'the body of the deities' as well as their 'temporary lodging place'. Wooden artefacts are thought to tap power from the divine source through the sacred wood. Kaminisca argues that 'branches of sacred trees or objects made of these trees were used in rituals because they are considered to possess part of the power of the tree' (Kaminisca, 1991: 3).¹⁴

Inoue's (1994) analysis of the formal characteristics of the first Buddhist statues provides further evidence for this thesis. First, images of the Buddha were carved out of sacred trees growing in the mountains. Later, statues with the roots of the tree still attached were venerated in shrines or temples. Next, statues were produced out of trees with parts left uncarved or with several knots visible (Inoue, 1994: 189).¹⁵ During the Heian period (793 -1185) when the syncretism between Buddhism and Shinto reached its height in Japan, the multitude of Shinto deities were depicted in human form. It is during this period that the Buddhist *honji-suijaku* theory developed. The argument put forward is that in order to guide the local population into Buddhist teachings, the true forms (*honji*) of the Buddha and Bodhisatva are disguised (*suijaku*) by representing them as indigenous deities (Grapard, 1998:242). In other words, local deities depicted in human form in paintings and statues were explained as incarnations of the Buddha.

How are statues supposed to work? The professional carver Nishimura (1996) describes the steps involved in the contemporary process of enlivening statues as follows. First, the carver produces the statue according to strict iconographic rules. Then, monks perform a ceremony to enliven the statue. They literally call the spirit of the Buddha to enter the statue. Finally, the power of the statue has to be recognised by believers through their prayers and their offerings of

¹³Several contributors discuss wood as living matter. Mauze demonstrates that for the Kwakiutl on the American North West coast, 'all objects made of cedar wood or bark were alive, for they were the transformation of 'something' alive' (Mauze, 1998: 240). In the same volume Knight discusses the way trees start a second life as timber used in wooden houses (Knight, 1998: 210-4).

¹⁴Wooden objects called *torimono*, such as sticks, were used to capture the power of deities during ancient Shinto rituals (Minzokugaku Jiten, [1951] 1994: 418). Today shamans still perform dances while holding objects wherein the spirit of the deity descends. In the Museum of Ethnology in Osaka, for example, a shamoji is displayed among miscellaneous items employed as *torimono* in Japan.

¹⁵Moreover, the woods used for Buddhist statues in Japan was from trees such as very tall trees (Nômoto, 1994: 29-32), trees with unusual shapes or those struck by lightning (Kaminisca, 1991) that were locally considered sacred).

flowers and incense¹⁶ (Nishimura, 1996: 94-5). Nishimura does not specify the wood used for statues. However, he stresses that statues must be correct copies of a certain recognised anthropomorphic form of the deity. In Buddhism, statues are the deities depicted and strict iconographic rules apply. In pre-Buddhist local religious traditions, sacred sites were always visible, but on special occasions religious professionals invited deities into temporary lodging places where they became the focus of attention (Grapard, 1982). Buddhist statues are, similarly, seen as spatio-temporal places where the deity can dwell. The stress placed on iconographic rules and the sacralisation rite reveals that religious authorisation of these statues within a broader hierarchy is significant. A final important point, which I will return to later, is that external agency is attributed to statues through the bodily practices of worshippers.

The Miyajima Benzaiten is currently worshipped at the Daiganji Temple. Her esoteric statue is kept hidden in a receptacle behind the altar. However, my informants at this temple told me that the statue kept there is actually a replica. The original used to be venerated in the Itsukushima Shrine but, during the iconoclasm at the end of the nineteenth century, it was transferred to a secret sanctuary in the Misen mountains, where it is still kept today.¹⁷ This raises two questions I aim to answer in the remainder of this section. Firstly, I will investigate the notion of the replica within Japanese religion. I am particularly interested in how the power of a deity depicted in a primary image, in this case a statue, is transmitted to its copies. Secondly, I will explore how the interiority or inaccessibility of the Divine adds to its religious agency.

The relationship between original esoteric statues and their replicas in Japan has been discussed by the historian Hur who focuses on the famous statue of the Asakusa Kannon, the main focus of veneration at the Sensōji Temple in Tokyo (Hur, 2000). The Asakusa Kannon is a tiny golden statue, said to be found by fishermen during the seventh century. Soon after its discovery, the statue was locked away from public view in a sealed receptacle because it was considered too dangerous to display, but also because it was feared that the valuable object would erode over time. An exact copy of the statue was crafted in wood by a famous monk and placed in another receptacle in front of the original statue. This substitute was only publicly displayed every thirty-three years or on special occasions (Hur, 2000: 10).

¹⁶This process resembles the Hindu ritual of enactment in five phases as described in detail by Davis (Davis, 1997: 34-7).

¹⁷During the iconoclasm of the nineteenth century some patrons managed to save statues which they kept in their homes where they continued to be worshipped (Grapard, 1998: 246).

The example of the Asakusa Kannon and the Miyajima Benzaiten shows that the production of a replica and the secrecy surrounding it can add to the mystery of the original statue which has never been seen. This practice relates to Gell's thesis that inaccessibility plays a key role in attributing agency to objects (Gell, 1998: 23). Within the Christian context, Brown (Brown, 1983) introduces us to what he calls the 'therapy of distance'. In short, he argues that pilgrimage is grounded in a 'yearning for intimate closeness,' for 'proximity' with the Divine. However, on arrival at the Shrine, the joy of proximity is dampened by the actual inaccessibility of the Divine (Brown, 1983: 87-88). Physical obstacles such as stairs, arches and gates heighten the effect of unattainability. In the end, there will always remain a certain degree of distance between the pilgrim and the Divine. It is this tension between distance and proximity that enables the *praesentia* 'or the physical presence of the holy' (ibid. 88). The Shroud of Turin, a major relic within Catholicism, offers another example of how proximity with the Divine can be created through inaccessibility. In order to preserve the Shroud, but probably also to increase its mystery, an exact copy was made during the sixteenth century and displayed in front of the original.¹⁸ All the cases discussed above also provide evidence for the thesis that in certain contexts, contrary to common western assumptions, replicas can increase the power and mystery of the original.

Another important point I want to stress in connection with the reproduction of static, primary images is that there seems to be a certain spatial hierarchy. The Japanese statue carver Nishimura describes how a newly carved statue derives its power from a central place (*hongū*) where the main statue of that Buddha is worshipped (Nishimura, 1996: 94).¹⁹ Davis has shown that in Hindu thought, the immobile root manifestation of the Divine imbues other incarnations with its power. Their materialisation in particular physical locations allowed the development of a system of temples (Davis, 1991: 31). Similarly, in Japan, particular deities and their statues are linked with certain shrines and temples which are ranked nation-wide. Freedberg's discussion (1989) of the spatial hierarchy of religious images within western Christianity also offers an interesting comparison. A large quantity of primary images of the same religious persona are spread throughout Europe. The archetype of these images is considered to be located in Rome, the religious centre, but each local image shows subtle material differences. Through analysing the physical properties of statues of the Virgin, for example, Freedberg concludes that each

¹⁸The copy was on display in Shroud Museum in Turin visited in August 2000, while the original was placed, temporarily, in the Basilica.

¹⁹Nishimura also explains how, before repairing a statue, the carvers perform a special ceremony to temporarily send back the spirit of the Buddha to the main statue (Nishimura. 1996).

specific place tries to make their Virgin statue special. Thus, we speak of The Virgin of Guadalupe, The Virgin of Regensburg or The Madonna of Loreto. The imaginary of the Virgin need to be consistent with Christian iconography, but each image can also be singularised through slight alternations; for example, by moving the child Jesus around, or through specific adornment or enshrinement (Freedberg, 1989: 113-115). The physical distinctions between statues of the Virgin may be seen as an expression of local identity, often linked with economic and political power and prestige, but this particularity is also directly linked with their efficacy (ibid. 120). In other words, only a particular image of the Virgin located in a particular place is known for certain miracles. Similarly, each Buddhist statue has its own specific physical qualities and, therefore, as we will see below, each site attracts pilgrims with specific prayers.

Religious replication is also positively employed to shrink the geographical distance between the centre and the periphery. An example of this practice within Christianity are the nineteenth century replicas of European shrines and pilgrimage sites built by Catholic communities in the US, especially the popular replica of Lourdes grottoes. These grottoes produce authenticity for American Christians and make the sacred available to the Catholic community world-wide (McDannell, 1995: 155).²⁰ The Japanese located at the periphery of Buddhism similarly tried to reduce the distance to the centre and increase the prestige of the Buddha by linking certain deities with their country of origin. Thus, it was, for example, stated that although Buddhas might appear in Japan in the form of Shinto deities, they had brought their residences with them from abroad. A number of stories tell of mountains that flew from India or China to Japan²¹ (Grapard, 1982: 218-219). Another technique used to achieve this was through linking Japanese sacred geography and architecture with sacred texts. For example, twenty-eight chapters in the Lotus Sutra corresponded with twenty-eight temples erected at Mount Rokugo in Kyushu (Grapard, 1982: 219).

The various forms of religious replication discussed in this section enable those at a distance to connect with, access and feel part of the sacred power at the centre. Of course, depending on one's point of view, this process can also be explained as the concentration of religious power at

²⁰Catholic culture, as well as nineteenth century Victorian culture (Orvell, 1989), did not consider artifice and repetition less authentic (MacDannell, 1995: 162).

²¹In western Christianity there is a similar account of how the house where Mary and Joseph lived in the Holy Land was lifted by angels and flown, after several stops along the way, to Loreto in Italy (Warner, 1976). In Walsingham, a pilgrimage centre with a long history in the U.K., an another exact copy of the Holy House was built (Coleman and Elsner, 1998: 50).

the centre from where believers in the periphery are controlled. However, this is not a one-sided process; we have seen that religious embodiments are locally appropriated; they are slightly altered and used in the creation of a certain regional uniqueness.²²

A related theme, to which I will turn next, is the relationships between the national distribution of the images of certain deities and the temples and shrines where they are enshrined and the development of pilgrimage circuits. Famous examples are, for example, the circuit of the thirty-three²³ temples where the deity Kannon is worshipped in the Kansai region or the eighty-eight sanctuaries associated with Kōbō Daishi, the founder of the Shingonshū sect, in Shikoku. Miyajima is also part of a popular pilgrimage circuit. It is one of the three most famous spots where Benzaiten is worshipped. The two other sites are Enoshima south of Tokyo and Chikubushima in Lake Biwa north of Kyoto.

4. Pilgrimages in Tokugawa, Japan: Prayer and Play at Religious Centres

In Japan, pilgrimages originated during the eighth century when travelling monks, and later also members of the aristocracy, went to pray at certain sacred places. During the Heian period (793-1185), for example, sacred sites such as Ise and Kumano were part of a well-known pilgrimage circuit on the Kii Peninsula. During the Japanese Middle Ages (thirteen-sixteen century), pilgrims went further afield to visit holy sites. The Misen Mountains on Miyajima, for example, became known as a sacred site visited by Shingonshū sect priests associated with Mount Kōya (south of Osaka) (Kōhō Miyajima, 1999). Grapard (1982) discusses medieval Buddhist pilgrimage. He explains that travel and the range of practices associated with it was itself a way to reach Buddhahood. For pilgrims, the whole path towards the religious site was sacred (Grapard, 1982: 205-7).

As the popularity of pilgrimages increased, temples and shrines sought ways to increase the number of their devotees. Many religious institutions began to trace their origins back to popular deities. Texts of the miraculous actions of deities linked with a particular institution and the benefits they bestowed upon their worshippers, called *engi*, were employed to spread the reputation of temples and shrines.²⁴ The *Itsukushima Engi*, which tells of the origin of the

²²Coleman and Elsner call this 'semi-replication' (Coleman and Elsner, 1998: 60).

²³The Bodhisattva Kannon is said to have appeared in thirty-three forms to save all salient beings.

²⁴*Engi* is an important Buddhist concept employed in discussions about causality to which I will return in detail later.

Itsukushima Shrine, dates from 1346. These stories of origin were often depicted in beautiful picture scrolls called *engimaki* that were used as educational aids during preaching.²⁵ A common theme is the discovery or the manufacture of a statue of the deity venerated. The origin of these artefacts was either attributed to the deities or to a famous priest. Reference is also made to particular emperors or other members of the aristocracy, who visited the statue to pray for the recovery of a certain illness or to ask for other merits. It was often their donations of money that resulted in the construction of a temple or shrine at the spot.

Throughout Japanese history, religious centres were powerful economic, military and political institutions which the political centre attempted to bring under its control. During the eleventh century, for example, the stronghold of the Shugendō mountain cult on Mount Hiko in Kyushu was linked with the Sōgōin multiplex in Kyoto, the political centre at that time. These political alliances led to economic privileges such as tax-cuts (Grapard, 1998: 222-3). The religious community on Miyajima has a long history of alliances with the aristocracy in Kyoto. Taira no Kiyomori, associated with the Heike clan rulers in Kyoto, ordered the construction of the Itsukushima Shrine during the twelfth century. It was built by craftsmen from the capital Kyoto in Shinden style, associated with the houses of the elite. Many of the treasures kept in the Itsukushima Shrine, which are now part of Japan's national heritage, date from the Heian period. Crafted fans, masks and other objects assembled are, for example, donations from the aristocracy in Kyoto who worshipped the cult of the island. Moreover, the Daishōin Temple-complex on Miyajima, also built during the twelfth century, was a branch temple of the Ninnaji Temple in Kyoto, strongly associated with the Imperial Line. Today, the Daishōin is a major sectarian headquarters temple of the Shingonshū Buddhist Sect, but the relationship with the Ninnaji Temple also continues.²⁶

For the majority of the population, official regulations restricted travel. It was only from the seventeenth century that ordinary people were allowed to travel more widely if going on a pilgrimage (Graburn, 1983 / Ishimori, 1995; Kanzaki, 1997).²⁷ In Japan, two innovations introduced by temples and shrines are directly linked with the increasing numbers of people able to go on pilgrimages. Firstly, calendars with *ennichi* or days when the bond with a certain god was

²⁵ Akai discusses how, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries religious paintings were employed to preach to common people (Akai, 1990: 169-75).

²⁶ The recently deceased charismatic head priest at the Daishōin Temple was also head abbot at the Ninnaji Temple in Kyoto.

²⁷ By way of comparison, in Western Europe pilgrimages boomed during the second half of the twelfth century (Spencer, 1998: 3).

the strongest were introduced. On such days, people would flock to the temple to pray to that particular deity for favours. The sacred days associated with the Miyajima Benzaiten are the first and the twenty seventh of each month. A second measurement taken to attract people to temples and shrines was the public display of secret treasures (*hihō*). This event was called *kaichō*, literally, 'to open a curtain'. *Kaichō* were normally held at fixed times. The statue of the Miyajima Benzaiten, for example, used to be displayed once every sixty years on the seventeenth of June. After WW2 it became possible to admire the replica of the Miyajima Benzaiten on the same day annually. This is another piece of evidence that the replica does not need to be considered less authentic than the original.

The public display of temple treasures was accompanied by huge spectacles. Hur (Hur, 2000) gives an account of a *kaichō* held at the Sensōji Temple during the Tokugawa period. She describes the souvenir shops, tea houses, brothels, stands with circus performances, Sumo wrestling and kabuki performances, and *misemono* booths in which wondrous, rare and sensational items such as exotic animals or automatons were on display (Hur, 2000: 59-61).²⁸ Because these events reaped huge economic benefits for the religious institutions concerned, special *kaichō* were also held, for example to collect money to repair buildings. *De-gaichō* or the display of secret treasures in other locations also occurred. Regional temples and shrines, for instance, organised *degaichō* in urban centres (Akai, 1990: 175). The use of the same vocabulary for piety and entertainment points at the more general blur between the sacred and the profane, between prayer and play in Japan.²⁹ The term *kaichō* is also nineteenth century slang for 'a crowd lost in the heat of gambling, lost in the pleasure of sex -within a religious space' (Hur, 2000: 217).

Events held at religious centres such as the *kaichō* afforded a pretext for travel and entertainment. Vaporis indicates that all pilgrimages during the Tokugawa period, even if induced by religious feelings, were actually secularised experiences. The shrine or temple was 'just a major attraction' among the other 'pleasures of the trip, the local delicacies, the entertainment, even the women, that made the trip worthwhile' (Vaporis, 1995: 34). Similarly, Formanek, who

²⁸By way of comparison, during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries churches in Western Europe were actively involved in the selling and often also the manufacturing of pilgrim badges. Shops were put up close to churches and cathedrals and sometimes trade was even conducted inside the church (Spencer, 1998: 15).

²⁹The first *de-gaichō* of the powerful Asakusa Kannon took place in 1920 in the Matsuzakaya Department store in Nagoya (Hur, 2000: 227). Today it is common to organise exhibitions of hidden treasures - as well as a range of other cultural events - in department stores (Creighton, 1998).

studied pilgrimages to Mount Tateyama during the same period (1600-1868), concludes that it was 'a highly institutionalised and commercialised form of pilgrimage... for which sightseeing and pleasure seeking was at least as important, if not more important than the religious goal' (Formanek, 1998: 178). Spencer argues, similarly, that in fourteenth century Western Europe pilgrimage was 'a social occasion combining an element of tourism - travelling for pleasure - with piety' enjoyed by all classes (Spencer, 1998: 1). The blurred relationship between sacred and secular travel will feature again in Chapter 3, where I will focus on the link between pilgrimage and tourism in Japan.

It should be clear by now that pilgrims played and prayed in the vicinity of their deities. In times of need, prayers for 'benefits in this world' (*gensei riyaku*) were addressed to a multitude of fashionable, fast changing deities, Shinto and Buddhist. How were powers extracted from the deities? Devotees exchanged money and acts of devotion for sacred objects and benefits from the deities. Hur (2000) makes a distinction between the way the elite and the common people engaged with the Divine. She reveals that patrons would pay a sum of money to the clergy to conduct esoteric rituals in order to acquire merits on their behalf. In return they would receive high quality talismans or votive offerings that embodied the power of the deity to take home. Commoners could not afford the mediation of priests. Instead, they would throw a few coins (*saisen*) in an offer box, say their prayers and take home a talisman with an emblem of the temple or shrine.

The question remains how prayers for material gain to deities fitted in with the strict moral and social code of the highly segregated Tokugawa society. The variety of entertainment available and the commercial activities that took place at religious centres were clearly in conflict with Confucian morality. Commerce was considered vulgar and merchants were the antithesis of the law-abiding virtuous elite of samurai (Totman, 1995: 1). Buddhism was increasingly criticised by Confucianist scholars for being wasteful (Lafleur, 1992: 85-6). The Tokugawa government repeatedly tried to reduce the overt display of wealth and urban consumerism. For example, they ratified a range of Sumptuary Laws, but these never really brought the hoped-for results. Moreover, a prayer culture that focuses on donations and personal gain clearly goes against the Buddhist doctrine of compassion towards all salient beings (Hur, 2000: 223-226). However, we have to keep in mind that in Buddhist ideology liberal giving is also considered the first step to salvation and unconditional donations are encouraged (Lafleur, 1992: 85). On top of that, by the

end of the Tokugawa period, the tolerance between Shinto and Buddhism began to fade. In order to retain their significant social role in society, Buddhist institutions emulated and collaborated with the central government. This is illustrated by the way Buddhist permitted the government to use their nation-wide parish system to enforce tighter control.³⁰

We have seen that the practices of devotees in front of their deities are significant in denoting external agency to religious images (Gell, 1998). It needs to be stressed here that both groups of devotees were similarly indifferent towards the actual meanings of the rituals - often abridged versions - performed by priests. When reciting sutras, for example, priests often only read the cover page. The rest of the text was skipped while they mechanically opened up and folded back the text (Hur, 2000: 40-1). These mechanical performances hint at the degree to which Japanese religion can be seen as a technology. An analogy can be drawn with Gell's interpretation of art production as a technology, set out in the introduction of this chapter (Gell, 1992). Today, the interaction between people and their deities continues to be characterised by the enactment of a range of technical practices. The most common examples are ringing the bell to announce one's arrival, throwing money in a collection box and clapping hands before prayer to catch the gods' attention, writing wishes on votive tablets, rubbing statues, and taking home charms.

Through acts of devotion, relationships with a certain deity that would offer assistance were established. Completing an official pilgrimage circuit was one way to create a bond with a certain deity. Pilgrims would follow a trajectory along a prescribed number of sites.³¹ At each site visited they would say prayers and leave a pilgrim's note (*nōsatsu*) behind.³² These notes were offerings that served as evidence of one's visit, but they were also a medium to transmit prayers to the deities. On returning home, pilgrims needed to prove that they had completed the whole circuit

³⁰The *Danka System* forced each household to register at and fulfil obligations towards a particular Buddhist temple. Buddhism became more and more seen as the protector of family values and was associated with rites for the ancestors (Lafleur, 1992:80-1). Today this is still evident in the way Buddhism is associated with funerals and the afterlife.

³¹Japanese words used for pilgrimage such as *junrei* or *henrō* encompass the meaning of going around or circumference.

³²Wooden plaques (*ofuda*) attached to the wall or pillars of temples and shrines visited are the predecessors of the paper pilgrim notes that are still used today when people embark on a formal pilgrimage. These notes have the name of the pilgrim imprinted on them and are either left in a designated box or are pasted on pillars and walls of temples and shrines (Minzoku tanbō jiten, 1992: 171)

and they, therefore, had the name of each place visited, the main deity worshipped and a treasure stamp printed in a special book (Minzoku tanbō jiten, 1992:192).³³ Today, it is still common for pilgrims on official pilgrimages to carry pilgrim notes and a stamp book around. Moreover, other travellers may also enjoy collecting stamps of places visited. I will return to the importance of completing a circuit in contemporary tourism in Chapter 3.

Often, village communities would pay the expenses of pilgrims who would pray for those left behind and bring home sacred charms and other souvenirs (Grabum, 1983: 52-53). Good luck charms (*engimono*) are one category of mobile object that were taken home from temples and shrines. They are, literally, 'things that secure a bond' with certain deities. Kyburz (1991) describes how, during the public display of statues, worshippers would touch a white rope (*en no tsuna*) connected to them to, literally, secure a bond with the deity (Kyburz, 1991:102).³⁴ This bond cord can be seen as the predecessor of mass-produced, mobile objects taken home from sacred places. Originally, ephemeral decorative objects such as sacred ropes made of straw (*shimenawa*), but later also other New Year items, were distributed as *engimono* for the coming year. Today a myriad of *engimono* can be purchased at temples and shrines all year long. However, they are sought for in particular at the start of the New Year, when most Japanese pay their first visit to shrines and temples.

Many inhabitants of Miyajima who I questioned about the ubiquitous character of shamoji apparent on the island answered that this was because they are an *engimono* of the deity Benzaiten. The following analysis of the creation myth of the Miyajima shamoji attempts to elucidate the semiotic relationship between shamoji and the sacred Island where Benzaiten is worshipped.

³³Bringing home evidence of having completed a certain pilgrimage was also considered very important in fourteenth and fifteenth century western Europe. Pilgrim badges, often worn on hats, advertised the pilgrims personal achievement and increased their prestige at home (Spencer, 1998: 16). Many pilgrim signs were brought back as gifts for those left behind (ibid.:18).

³⁴In the Latin West *brandae*, pieces of cloth lowered on to the tomb of saints, were considered to be invested with their blessings and taken home by the pilgrims (Brown, 1981: 88). Pemberton, similarly, explains how a white shroud draped over the grave of a Javano-Islamic saint is annually cut into square pieces that are later distributed as amulets (Pemberton, 1994: 283).

5. The Miyajima Shamoji Creation Myth

While conducting fieldwork on Miyajima, time and time again the story of the monk Seishin, the inventor of the Miyajima shamoji, was narrated by shopkeepers, employees at the tourist information centre, priests at Itsukushima Shrine, monks at the Daishōin Temple, restaurant owners, museum personnel and many others. The following text is my translation of an example of the myth of origin of the Miyajima shamoji, written on a note wrapped around shamoji produced by Miyachū, the shamoji wholesale company that will feature in Chapter 2:

In the Kansei era (1789-1801), the monk Seishin, living in the Kōmei Temple, began to produce shamoji on Miyajima. One evening, the Goddess Benzaiten appeared before him in a dream and the beautiful form of the Japanese lute she was holding in her hands inspired him to design the shape of the Miyajima shamoji. He taught the islanders how to craft shamoji using the holy trees from mount Misen. If one scoops rice with this shamoji made from sacred trees, the whole family will stay in good health. Both the virtue of monk Seishin and the Miyajima shamoji to scoop good luck with became known all over Japan and Miyajima developed into Japan's number one producer of shamoji.

In this chapter, I am mainly interested in those elements of the origin myth that illustrate how the shamoji is constructed as an *engimono* of the Deity Benzaiten. The activities of the virtuous Buddhist monk, Seishin, the inventor and mentor of the shamoji and more broadly the role of the priestly class in the establishment of an economy on the Island will be studied in detail in the next chapter.

The production of Miyajima shamoji at the end of the eighteenth century runs parallel with changes that occurred during the Tokugawa period in Japanese society at large. Continuous political stability led to an enormous growth in the economy. Because of the positive developments in agriculture, followed by a rapid growth of population and commercialisation of the economy, consumer culture expanded. Travel and related industries grew rapidly at this time (Hanley, 1997:13). As pilgrimages boomed, the flow of pilgrims to Miyajima, a famous place noted for its natural beauty, and to the Itsukushima Shrine, increased. A reference from 1643 names Miyajima as 'one of the three most beautiful landscapes in Japan' (*Nihon Sankei*). The fact that Miyajima was considered one of the 'the three major sites in Japan where Benzaiten is worshipped' (*Nihon Sanbenzai*), further stimulated religious travel to the island. Moreover, Miyajima had emerged as an important harbour on the Inland Sea trade route and was frequented by traders.

In the origin myth, we are told that Benzaiten hinted in a dream to the monk Seishin that he should produce shamoji. Gell (1998) has pointed out that in the case of religious objects the agency of the actual makers is often forgotten. Objects made for religious audiences are commonly believed to have originated by themselves or from a divine source (Gell, 1998: 23). In western Christianity miraculous images that appeared as early as the sixth century were called *acheiropoieta*, which is Greek for 'not made by human hand', to distinguish them from human artefacts worshiped by pagans (Sturgis, 2000: 77). Moreover, many images of the Virgin, for example, are either ascribed to the angels or to St. Luke, who was a craftsman. Through their divine agency, these images form a 'direct chain of descent from God to man' (Warner, 1976: 292). Similarly, by ascribing divine agency to the Miyajima shamoji, it is turned into a medium between people and the deities.

In several tales in the *Nihon mukashibanashi tsūkan* (A Survey of Japanese Folktales, 1977) shamoji are depicted as gifts exchanged between the gods and humans. A prevalent theme tells about a poor person who receives a shamoji from a deity or from a messenger of a deity as a gift for good behaviour, especially honesty and hospitality. The donors are often figures associated with rice such as a mouse, the messenger of the rice god, or the deity Bisshamon, god of rice and wealth. In other stories, a girl born out of a piece of bamboo or a snake thank their caretakers with a magic shamoji. The bamboo girl brings us back to our discussion of folk beliefs that link ideas about fertility with container objects attributed with internal agency. The snake is a water god connected with fertility and plenty. We have seen that Benzaiten is also a deity linked with water and, therefore, mainly worshipped on islands. On Miyajima, she became the main focus of worship in the Itsukushima Shrine. In conclusion, because Benzaiten is said to have given Seishin the incentive to produce shamoji in a dream, Miyajima shamoji may also be interpreted as gifts from this deity.

In the origin myth, Miyajima shamoji are also presented as objects made from the wood of sacred trees in the Misen Mountains. This leads us back to my discussion about the process of transmission and segregation of sacred power in wooden objects. We have seen how the divine power of Benzaiten materialised in the landscape was transmitted into her statue through the wood of sacred trees. Similarly, the power of Benzaiten is generated in every shamoji made from

the sacred trees on the island.³⁵ This example of transmission of power through a substance associated with a sacred site in Japan allows a comparison with the use of relics in Buddhism and Christianity. In short, shamoji are constructed as part of the sacred landscape in much the same way as relics are a fragment of a sacred body (Brown, 1983: 78). I am aware that this analogy is problematic because the nature of relics is intrinsically different from shamoji. Relics are a physical part of the body of a saint and they have no practical use or decorative value when removed from their container. Still, both are mobile objects metonymically linked with sacred sites, shrines or tomes that are taken home by pilgrims.

Geary interprets the body of the saints as a medium between people and their god. His explanation that 'relics were the saints, continuing to live among men' (Geary, 1986: 175) corresponds to the notion of the 'living presence of the Buddha' in Buddhism. As Schopen formulates it, 'the physical relics of Sakyamuni were endowed with more than just 'life' or 'breath'. They were 'informed', 'perfumed', 'saturated', 'pervaded', 'imbued' with just those characteristics which defined the living Buddha' (Schopen, 1987: 204). Brown has pointed out that the development of the cult of the saints and the circulation of relics resulted in 'the "humanization" of the natural world' in Western Europe' (Brown, 1983: 126). Belief structures in the landscape were replaced by a dependency on the saints. The shamoji case study illustrates how, in Japan, Buddhist ideas about personalised power in relics amalgamated with Shinto beliefs concerning power in the landscape. Thus, the shamoji may be seen as a physical part of the body of Benzaiten, whose virtue is materialised in the beauty of the landscape.

There is another important element in the Seishin myth, which links the efficacy of the shamoji with Benzaiten. Miyajima shamoji are said to evoke the shape of the Japanese lute (*biwa*) Benzaiten is holding. The lute symbolises Benzaiten's power to assist people in achieving musical virtuosity. It is also a magical tool with which she is thought to make 'divine sounds flow and it brings joy and happiness to the people' (Sasama, 1991: 18). Miscellaneous images of Benzaiten circulate in Japan, but in her capacity as one of the seven good luck deities she always holds a lute. Shamoji shaped after this musical instrument hold the promise of bringing good fortune to everyone.

³⁵Nakayama explains that 'wooden tools which played a crucial role in daily life were made from sacred trees because they were endowed with divine power from that tree' (Nakayama, 1994: 232).

The fact that Benzaiten is one of a group of seven good luck gods worshipped in Japan is important. Deities that bestowed good fortune had a large following and at the end of the sixteenth century a cult surrounding seven good luck gods (*shichifukujin*), developed with its origin in native and foreign religious elements, (Miyata, 1993: 108-10). The deities celebrated are Ebisu, a native Japanese deity; Fukurokuju, Jurōjin and Hotei with roots in China and Daikokuten, Bishshamonten and Benzaiten, Buddhist gods originally worshipped in India. Benzaiten, the focus of my discussion, is the only female deity among the lucky seven. Each god symbolises ideas of plenty, fertility and longevity and their iconography reflect this. Ebisu, for example, is often depicted with a fishing rod in one hand and a fish in the other, while Daikoku is standing on rice bales. A common depiction of the seven good luck gods shows them with their paraphernalia sitting together in a treasure ship.³⁶

Today the powers of the seven good luck gods remain highly esteemed. They are among a range of deities people address for assistance in their everyday lives. Most popular are those deities who have proven to be effective, but their popularity may change and deities disappear and appear continuously.³⁷ Through acts of devotion and donations, deities are persuaded to assist people in collecting 'this-worldly' merits. This section has shown that shamoji belong to a category of mass produced and distributed objects through which anybody can establish a relationship with the deities.³⁸

The nature of the spirituality embodied in these charms should be seen within the light of the Japanese preoccupation with luck on an everyday basis (see Chapter 6). Here, I am mainly interested in how mobile objects function as mediators between this-world and the other-world and I want to end this chapter with a more general discussion about the relationship between the spiritual and the material world in Japan.

³⁶ Pilgrimages to the seven good luck gods (*shichifuku môde*) were organised around the beginning of a New Year. Pilgrims would follow a circuit of seven temples, each worshipping a certain good luck god either within a broader region or in one city.

³⁷ After industrialisation at the end of the nineteenth century, the reason for existence of many deities central in the elaborate prayer culture of Tokugawa Japan ceased and they disappeared one by one. Exceptions are the deities Ebisu and Inari, gods of good luck in business and good fortune, who are today integrated in a nation-wide network of shrines and temples.

³⁸ Shamoji ensure bonds between people and deities but as we shall see later that they are also gifts that create bonds between people.

6. Discussion: The Fluidity of the Material and Spiritual Worlds

Hare and *ke* are re-occurring terms in discussions about the cosmology of pre-modern Japanese. Most Japanese folklorists argue that all spheres of life were divided into *hare*, which expresses the formal, non-ordinary and the sacred, and *ke*, which stands for the ordinary. This classification is commonly thought to have disappeared with the introduction of western perceptions of space and time at the end of the nineteenth century. However, recent research has revealed that these concepts had already become less meaningful long before that. Manzenreiter, for example, shows that the days of *hare* and *ke* were closely connected during the Tokugawa period (Manzenreiter, 1998: 375). This echoes my earlier discussion in this chapter about the connection between prayer and play in Tokugawa Japan.

Clearly influenced by Durkheim's (1915) thinking, some Japanese researchers have also questioned the applicability of the *hare-ke* dichotomous model, to the Japanese case. In Ito's view, the Japanese have always considered the sacred and the profane as inter-related (Ito, 1995: 139). I agree with Ito but we also need to be cautious not to presuppose a Western versus Japanese opposition by confusing discourses about the sacred and the secular with actual practices. In their study of contemporary pilgrimages in Walsingham in the U.K., Coleman and Elsner (1998), for instance, demonstrate that within the western religious framework, too, the boundaries between the sacred and the secular are not always that clear-cut. These researchers depict pilgrimage as a complex performative activity that draws on a variety of material resources made available at the site. All pilgrimages are characterised by a certain playfulness, but pilgrims take two rather different attitudes to the fun aspect of their religious experiences. Some visitors, called 'canonical' pilgrims, draw a clear line between their playful behaviour and serious liturgical activities. Other pilgrims mix play and piety, either by exaggerating the performance or by transforming the rites into more personal experiences or forms of sociability. In this case, fun is not considered to reduce the efficacy of the variety of performances enacted. On the contrary, ludic elements enable these people to experiment with the mixture of religious genres available (Coleman and Elsner, 1998: 58-61).

The main point for us to remember at this stage in the thesis is that the spiritual is considered to be present in all realms of life in Japan. Contemporary Japanese often turn to religion in their search for this-worldly success, wealth and prosperity. The following ethnographic examples indicate that the pursuit of material and symbolic profit is not necessarily seen as separate from

the religious and ritual sphere within other cultural contexts. Parry's (1994) discussion of the fierce bargaining between priests and clients in mortuary Hindu rites in Banares in South India challenges assumptions that link bargaining with the impersonal relationships seen as characteristic of monetary exchange (Parry, 1994: 139-41). The pursuit by the priests of personal material gain is considered a necessary part of the ritual. Moreover, the 'ability to make material demands on others is an index of the closeness of the relationship - an assertion of the interdependence and mutual obligation' (ibid.142). Buddhism, similarly, propagates an ideology of generous giving that often goes together with exploitation for personal material gain. Most famously, Tambiah (1982) has demonstrated how in Thailand amulets invested with the charisma of Buddhist mountain priests are employed to exploit others. Closer to home, Coleman argues that Word of Life Christians in Sweden draw no strict boundaries between the spiritual and the material world. Success in business is intrinsically linked with one's faith, also called one's spiritual career (Coleman, 2000: 191-2). Another example of the way the spiritual and the material are successfully combined is given by Meyer (1997) in her study of Pentecostalist churches in Ghana. The Ewe people, for example, turned to the Pentecostal church in the hope of improving their material situation. One way to ask for prosperity in this world is by sending imaginary cheques in their prayers to the deities (Meyer, 1997: 13-4).

The above studies show that the economic style of the religious activities concerned does not reduce them to instrumental practices only concerned with individual gain. Similarly, in the case of the shamoji, there is no such reductionist implication. As the anthropologist Ian Reader (1991) has indicated, we have to keep in mind that each individual has their own motivation to perform certain actions and purchase a charm at religious centres. Prayers are also sent for emotional support. In Reader's words

these actions and objects are concerned with the creations of a sense of ease and with helping people to feel happy and bright in some way, whether through the reassuring peace of mind that can come from having an amulet in one's car and the *kami* [deities] on one's side, or from bringing into the open an inner wish or worry, or even from the enjoyment that may flow from buying a talisman as an expression of love or even simply as a souvenir for a sibling, parent or friend (Reader, 1991: 190).

Moreover, elaborate rites for the death and everyday practices associated with ancestor worship are ample proof that contemporary Japanese people are also concerned with the other world.³⁹

³⁹William Lafleur (1992) challenges the assumption that in Japan Buddhism with its otherworldly doctrine was appropriated to the native orientation towards the concreteness of this world. He shows that

The boundaries between life and death are more fluid than in western Judeo-Christian traditions. It is thought that traces of the other world can be seen in this one. As we have seen above, the mountains are believed to be the place where the spirits of the dead reside. Another striking example of how the other world is present in the everyday lives of contemporary Japanese are the formations of the six statues of the Bodhisatva Jizō, often placed at street corners. The six Jizō are supposed to help humans in their journey through the six realms of existence (Lafleur, 1992: 49).⁴⁰ These statues appear with similar frequency in the most isolated areas such as on the tops of mountains and along a main road in downtown Osaka or Tokyo.

The above examples of the way the material and the spiritual worlds inter-relate in a number of different cultural contexts also draw attention to a more general tension between the striving for an idealised, transcendent world free of suffering and the existing social order of the human world. This reveals a contradiction common to all salvation religions. Orthodox religious doctrines may focus on the renunciation of the world, but in practice alternative routes to salvation are also sought. Within the Asian context, Hindu and Buddhist religious doctrines place great importance on the notion of karma. Karma operates on two distinct, but complementary, levels (Keyes and Daniel, 1983). Firstly, within the theological doctrine karma is associated with transcendental, ultimate problems. This is mainly the arena of religious professionals and textual knowledge. The second view grounded in pragmatic religious traditions, situates karma with the immediacy of everyday life (Babb, 1983: 170; Keyes, 1983: 16). My study is not concerned with the abstract hermeneutic concept of karma. Instead, I focus on the practical application of karma within popular religion.

Karma theory was introduced in Japan during the fourteenth century through Buddhism. Japanese clergy and lay people alike found rational explanations for the world and human experience in the Buddhist doctrine of karmic causality. Six modes of being, based on karmic rewards and retributions were considered to exist in the universe through which one transmigrated (LaFleur, 1983: 27-29). In Buddhist doctrine, the stress is on the responsibility of the individual for their own actions, but within popular Buddhism throughout Asia the human burden is lightened by offering possibilities to avert misfortune through action. Thus, it is thought

according to Buddhist thought, all things necessary include their opposites and, therefore, Buddhists were also concerned with this-worldly matters (Lafleur, 1992: 76-7).

⁴⁰The six realms through which all beings are supposed to move on their way to enlightenment are a Buddhist concept. According to good or bad deeds accumulated, one may either move up or down the scale during rebirth.

that one can receive positive karma or merits through proper actions (Keyes, 1983: 19). It is this association between karma and merit that is most significant within the context of my discussion about the Japanese practice of praying for benefits in this world.

Japanese Buddhists developed several ways to enable people to transcend the law of karma. Firstly, one could escape suffering by showing devotion to certain Bodhisattva's such as Kannon and Jizo, who can infiltrate all six courses. Bodhisattvas are compassionate beings who voluntarily remained within the realm of transmigration in order to help devotees. Secondly, by chanting the Amida Nembutsu, a direct link could be created with Amida Buddha in the Pure Land Paradise located in a seventh level where there was no transmigration.⁴¹ This relates back to my earlier discussion about the way the Miyajima landscape was seen as an earthly representation of the Pure Land Paradise. Thirdly, four additional worlds were added and each of these ten worlds was considered to totally include the others. So this world and the transcendental one were much more seen as intertwined. Finally, the fourth path to salvation could be reached through play. The freedom and detachment from self-attaining goals of the Bodhisattvas were taken as a model to strive after (LaFleur, 1983: 50-57). This last point also offers an additional explanation for the intertwining of play and prayer in Japan.

Alternative routes to salvation are commonly grounded in material practices. Dying in Banares, for example, is one way to salvation in the Hindu tradition. Parry (1994) has demonstrated that in this case priests are key mediators between both worlds. Similarly, Buddhist priests play a crucial role in Japanese funeral rituals. This indicates that religious professionals have a certain degree of control over the access to spiritual power in Japan. However, the availability of a range of material culture that mediates between the spiritual and the material world enables people to have a multitude of different encounters with the Divine. The static nature of some forms of religious embodiment such as the beautiful landscape, the sacred trees and the wooden statue of the deity Benzaiten discussed in this chapter places limitations on this interaction. However, mass-produced mobile objects allow anyone to communicate with the Divine on an individual, informal level. *Engimono* or good luck charms, the focus of this thesis, belong to this category of mobile objects which mediate between the spiritual and the material world.

⁴¹The Pure Land Buddhist sect also developed ways to make the link with Amida tangible. A good example of this is the way threads attached to a representation of Amida were placed in the hands of a dying person chanting the Amida nembutsu (LaFleur, 1983: 51).

This chapter has demonstrated that *engimono* are employed to establish a tangible relationship with a certain deity and, by extension, a certain temple, shrine, or in our case an island. I want to stress that the efficacy of these charms is also grounded in their physical properties, irrespective of their relationship with a certain place or deity, but this topic will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6. Freedberg (1989) has argued that the efficacy of mobile secondary objects in Christianity is grounded in the power of the original in which they partake. This power might be transmitted through contact, mimetic figuration or words (Freedberg, 1989: 128). The question whether words can also link material culture with a certain place will be taken up in Chapter 2 where I examine how the local community on Miyajima has created a new metonymic link between shamoji and the island through printing words on the object concerned. An example of the first type of transference of power suggested by Freedberg is *eulogia*, ampullae filled with substances from the shrines and tomes taken home during early Christianity (ibid.128). We have seen that shamoji are linked with Miyajima through their wooden substance. An example of transmitting power from the original through figuration are the Flemish pilgrimage pendants called *bedevaartvaantjes*, mass produced since the sixteenth century. They carry images of key saints from the shrine visited (ibid. 124-126). The process of figuration has also been applied to the shamoji. Today, a series of shamoji with images of Benzaiten or the Itsukushima Shrine is on sale in souvenir shops on Miyajima (see Chapter 5). What this chapter in combination with those that follow demonstrates is that the power attributed to prayer depends on specific media of efficacy.

Chapter 2 The Commodification of Spirituality

Wood, Stamps and Authenticity

1. Introduction: Wooden Souvenirs and the Craft Industry on Miyajima

Chapter 1 considered the way spiritual power is embodied and transferred in one item of material culture in Japan. At the end of the eighteenth century a metonymic relationship was established between shamoji and Miyajima Island. In short, the power in the island was considered to be transmitted through the wood of the sacred trees Miyajima shamoji were made of. This chapter will discuss the mass production and commercial distribution of Miyajima shamoji. I will first investigate how the decreasing availability of wood, together with the introduction of nature preservation laws since the beginning of the twentieth century, has influenced shamoji production. At issue are various strategies shamoji makers employed to overcome the scarcity of wood resources. A second and related issue deals with the notion of authenticity within the Japanese context. Miyajima shamoji were always produced in great quantities, first by hundreds of wood craftsmen and later by machines. Sophisticated distribution networks based on the tourist trade of souvenirs on the Island (see section B), and also the direct distribution to cities via wholesalers have been in place for a long time.

A re-occurring theme throughout my thesis is the close link between religion and commerce, between the sacred and the secular in Japan. The myth of origin of the shamoji, discussed in Chapter 1, suggests that Seishin, a Buddhist monk living on the island, began to produce wooden objects to sell to visitors. Miyajima was not fit for agriculture and its fishing grounds were poor. Its inhabitants, first monks and later laymen, depended on visitors for their survival. The island is a stronghold of the Buddhist Shingonshū sect and it is probable that monks living on the island were influential in the establishment of a local economy that centred on the trade in charms and souvenirs. As the flow of pilgrims increased with the development of mass pilgrimages after the seventeenth century, souvenir shops sprung up in front of the gates of temples and shrines. We have seen in Chapter 1 that the sale of goods as souvenirs, ranging from local products to religious talismans, in the precincts of temples and shrines was an activity of economic importance for the religious institutions and also for the surrounding establishments. In Japan, there exists a strong historical connection between material culture distributed at shrines and temples and souvenirs. Souvenirs are called *omiyage* which literally translates as objects 'from a shrine (*omiya*) presented in a box' (*ke*). Charms and food offerings were brought home by the first

pilgrims and distributed among the village community who helped sponsor the trip (Kanzaki, 1997: 159-60).

Returning to Miyajima and the monk Seishin, we know that he lived from 1742 until 1800 on Miyajima Island. Historical documents describe how he was concerned with the well being of the islanders and searched for ways to ease their harsh life. He organised public works such as building roads and digging wells and canals. Several sites linked with Seishin's activities on the Island will be discussed in Chapter 3 on tourism. We know that Seishin's family had ties with wood craftsmen and it is, therefore, plausible that he advised the islanders to produce wooden objects. Temples and shrines throughout Japan are associated with the production and distribution of handicrafts. The Negorōji Temple in Wakayama Prefecture on the Kii Peninsula in central Japan, for instance, is famous for its lacquer ware called 'Negorōji nuri'.

In the previous chapter, I explained how beliefs concerning sacred trees played an important role in creating a link between shamoji and the island. According to Miyamoto and Kanzaki, during the nineteenth century, shamoji were produced from a kind of cypress called the nettle tree (*hō no ki*), and also cherry trees (*sakura*) and mountain mulberries (*kuwa*) that grew on the island (Miyamoto and Kanzaki, 1972: 57). I did not find any sources that mention that these are actually sacred trees worshipped on the island, although all trees comprise the types of wood used for the production of Buddhist statues in Japan. Inoue lists Japanese cypress, cherry trees, zelkova, mulberry and nutmeg (Inoue, 1994: 206-210).

Wooden shamoji were sold as famous souvenirs from Miyajima since the nineteenth century. However, during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, another wooden product was firmly associated with Miyajima. This was a set of five wooden toothpicks called *iroyōshi*, each item painted in a different colour (Okazaki, 1991: 5). Woodblock prints from this period show a large number of toothpick vendors on the island. Toothpicks were very popular souvenirs from religious centres throughout Japan during the Tokugawa period. At the Sensōji Temple in Tokyo, for example, the majority of stalls sold toothpicks (Hur, 2000: 66-67). Only during the second half of the nineteenth century did shamoji replace toothpicks as the most popular souvenir from Miyajima (Kanzaki, 1997: 164; Miyamoto and Kanzaki, 1972: 55). The earliest visual representation of the Miyajima shamoji is found in a humorous, illustrated travel diary in seven volumes called *Souvenirs from Miyajima and Pleasantry along the Way* (*Kokkei Dōchū Miyajima Miyage*), written in 1850 by a Mr. Ichimaru from Hiroshima who made a pilgrimage to Miyajima.

On the cover of one volume, two shamoji are depicted lying among other souvenirs such as shells with images of the Grand Gate inscribed. Inside the same volume, there is a picture of a female shopkeeper selling toothpicks, chopsticks and shamoji. The shamoji depicted in both pictures have an oval slightly hollow head and a long thin round handle. I will call this shamoji the 'Seishin shamoji' after the monk who is said to have invented the Miyajima shamoji. A statue of monk Seishin on display in the Folklore and History Museum on Miyajima holds a similar shamoji in his hands.

To produce these souvenirs, craftsmen active on Miyajima needed a large amount of wood. Furthermore, at the end of the nineteenth century, three other wood related professions were introduced on Miyajima. These were wooden turnery (*rokuro zaiku*), hollowed out wooden crafts (*kurimono zaiku*) and Miyajima carvings (*Miyajima bori*). Today, these three specialised woodcrafts and the shamoji makers are grouped together in Miyajima Woodcrafts (*Miyajima zaiku*). Craftsmen were not the only people involved in the production of wooden goods. The craft industry on Miyajima also depended on mountain workers (*yamashi*) and wholesalers (*tonya*). Mountain workers, the equivalent of contemporary lumberjacks, climbed the mountains to cut trees and process them into blocks left to dry on the spot. Wholesale companies bought the half-finished products and distributed them among craftsmen who received a wage in return for the finished products (Miyamoto and Kanzaki, 1972: 56- 57). The wholesalers were in control of the production process since both the mountain workers and craftsmen depended on them. Around 1888, more than three hundred mountain workers were active in the Miyajima mountains (*ibid.*: 48).¹ They supplied wood to more than seven hundred wood craftsmen, mainly shamoji makers (Ishida, 1972: 13). This account of the wood-related industry on Miyajima island provides further evidence for the argument, set out in the introduction, that Japan had already reached a high level of industrialisation and could be compared to capitalist models of organisation prior to the official modernisation of society based on a western model at the end of the nineteenth century.

The thriving production of wooden goods on Miyajima must have had a devastating influence on the forest.² Under the Forest Act, Miyajima became a National Forest (*kokuyūrin*) from 1898 and

¹During this time, Miyajima had a thriving amusement industry. Close to the Shrine there was a lively red light district and offices for gambling.

²Miyamoto mentions that timber from the Miyajima forest was probably used to build the Itsukushima Shrine, temples and also houses on the island. During the nineteenth century, the Miyajima forest also supplied fuel and timber for Hiroshima City (Miyamoto and Kanzaki, 1972: 48). Okazaki mentions that the rulers of Hiroshima Han (Province) already exploited the forest on the island for timber and fuel during the seventeenth century (Okazaki, 1991: 5).

deforestation was prohibited. The new regulations meant that mountain workers on Miyajima had to travel to the mainland, first to the mountains of the Chugoku region and later to northern Japan in search of wood. By the 1930s, the number of shamoji makers had dropped to three hundred, joined by two hundred turnery craftsmen and fifty carvers (Miyamoto and Kanzaki, 1972: 62). The growing scarcity of wood on Miyajima and in Japan in general was one of the reasons for introducing regulations to protect nature. However, foreign ideas about nature conservation also influenced Japan's nature policy. In 1912, for example, the German botanist Engler analysed, documented and praised Miyajima's extraordinary flora and fauna. In 1929, the national government declared the mountains and forest on Miyajima natural treasures (*tennenkinenbutsu*). Around the same time, Hiroshima Prefecture decided to turn Miyajima, together with a number of other picturesque islands located in the Japanese Inland Sea, into a National Park Special Protected Area (Kōhō Miyajima, 1999).

2. Wood, Japaneseness and Authenticity

Today, more than ninety percent of the surface of Miyajima is covered with forest. The forest is an important asset for the local community, which draws on an elaborate discourse about Miyajima's unspoiled nature to promote tourism (see Chapter 3). Visitors are repeatedly informed that Miyajima has retained a 'pre-historic forest' (*genseirin*). It is claimed that the forest has been kept intact since prehistoric times because the island is a sacred place where nature has always been worshipped. The current popularity of this discourse should be seen within the light of the increased concern about nature and environmentalism since the end of the eighties in Japan.

During my fieldwork, it became clear that the depiction of Miyajima as a place where people live in harmony with nature is locally met with mixed feeling. Several people on the island questioned the long-term benefits of the continued stress placed on the pristine nature of the forest. Instead, it was argued that it would be better to inform tourists that the forest was always used extensively to make crafts and supply timber. I was further told that anyone who walks around in the forest would be able to challenge the 'prehistoric-forest theory' because they would notice that no large old trees are left on the island. In reality, the forest only ceased its function as a resource after strict laws were enforced. These rules put in place, often from outside, to save Miyajima's vegetation, continue to restrict the freedom of its inhabitants. Mr. Umebayashi, the mayor of Miyajima, explained that because they live in a nature park as well as a heritage site, people on Miyajima are subjected to many laws and regulations in their everyday lives. When someone, for example, decides to build a house on the island, they need to fill out more than thirteen

documents concerning issues such as the height of the house, the shape of the roof and even the colour of the windows.

The myth that people on Miyajima live in harmony with nature frequently clashes with the reality of living in a Nature Park. In 1999, this tension materialised in a fierce discussion about the fate of the more than two hundred deer that freely roam the streets of Miyajima. Deer³ are an important tourist attraction on Miyajima. They are depicted on posters promoting the island and most tourists expect to be greeted by a group of deer on arrival. However, for the majority of locals deer are a nuisance. One of the main problems is that they eat almost anything that comes along: plastic bags, trees, entrance tickets, and souvenirs. An elderly woman taking care of the sale of charms at the Daiganji temple, for example, complained that deer even eat the food offerings for the deities. As a consequence all gardens, schools, temples and other places where there might be potential food have to be fenced-in. In recent years many deer have become sick because of malnutrition and a fierce discussion has developed around whether or not the deer should be fed by the local authorities.⁴

The restrictions put into place to protect nature on Miyajima not only weigh heavy on the day to day life of the local community they also, as we will see next, endanger the cultural heritage on the island. The following data about the reconstruction of the wooden vermilion Grand Gate standing in the bay in front of the Itsukushima Shrine serves to highlight some of its major implications. *Torii* or Shinto gateways demarcate sacred space.⁵ The Miyajima Grand Gate or *Ôtorii* is famous because it is the only one of its kind floating in water.⁶ Today's *Ôtorii*, built in 1875, is the eighth copy. The sixteen metres high and twenty-four-metre width construction is placed on the sea bed without foundations. The weight of the pillars is supposed to keep the structure upright. Traditionally these pillars are made of camphor tree (*kusu no ki*) wood which is

³In Shinto beliefs deer are considered to be sacred animals. They are messengers of the deities.

⁴During winter 1998 and spring 1999, a study group led by a local zoologist, Mr. Kanaizuka, conducted extensive research into the health of the Miyajima deer. Then the community was consulted about the future of the deer in a questionnaire sent from house to house. It was finally decided that deer should no longer be fed and the town hall put up signs to prohibit locals and tourists from doing so.

⁵*Torii* are commonly placed at the entrance to Shinto sanctuaries, but their frequent appearance in front of Buddhist temples points again at the syncretism between Shinto and Buddhism discussed in Chapter 1.

⁶In the past, small boats with visitors would past through this gateway on their way to the Itsukushima Shrine. These days boats no longer enter through the gateway but an armada of ferryboats approaching the island makes a wide turn to offer tourists the best view of the *Ôtorii* in the bay.

considered to offer the best protection against the salt water and termites.⁷ Its maximum life is between a hundred and twenty and a hundred and fifty years and, because the present *Ōtorii* is more than a hundred and twenty years old, preservation is a top priority. However, the search for materials to build the ninth *Ōtorii* has been a nightmare. Only extremely tall camphor trees which are at least four or five hundred years old can be used for its construction. No such trees could be found inside Japan.

A question relevant to my discussion is why is it necessary to rebuild the *Ōtorii* in wood? In recent years, all over Japan wooden *torii*, and wooden shrines and temples, have been increasingly replaced by copies in more durable materials. On Miyajima, most wooden *torii* have been rebuilt in stone or concrete. The big stone *torii* at the beginning of the path leading to the Itsukushima Shrine, for example, was built during the Meiji period (1868-1908) with money collected among the islanders. Although the use of materials other than wood does not seem to be an issue in the above cases, my inquiry about the possibility of building a stone or a concrete *Ōtorii* met with extremely negative reactions. I was told that because the Miyajima *Ōtorii* is promoted nationally as being built out of wood, the local community has a certain responsibility towards visitors. This comment should be seen in the light of the nostalgic depiction of the countryside in Japanese domestic tourism (see Chapter 3). Although the lives of Japanese living in rural and urban areas have become increasingly similar, the countryside continues to be looked on as a more authentic, traditional place. William Kelly, for example, has discussed this ambivalence in Japanese society whereby rural communities are simultaneously incorporated and differentiated from Japanese society at large (Kelly, 1990).

A second remark repeatedly made in relation to *Ōtorii* is that Japanese people feel closer to a wooden gate that is affected by weather and humidity. In Chapter 1, I discussed the belief, rooted in Japanese folklore, that wood is an animated substance. Although historical evidence suggests that the Japanese chose to surround themselves with wooden artefacts, I want to stress that one needs to be extremely cautious with generalisations about a uniquely Japanese appreciation for wooden things.⁸ These kinds of claims originate in a well-developed discourse that depicts Japan as a wood or tree culture (*ki no bunka*) and which has pervaded all levels of contemporary

⁷The first Grand Gate was erected in 1167 by Taira Kiyomori, the local warlord who was a strong believer in the powers of the island and who also financed the restoration of the Itsukushima Shrine. Since then, the structure has been repeatedly destroyed and rebuilt.

Japanese society. In short, the argument put forward is that Japanese people are naturally attracted to wood and this finds its expression, for example, in their preference for wooden buildings, wooden furniture or wooden tableware. The extended oeuvre of Akioka Yoshio (1977, 1997), a widely read industrial designer-cum-popular writer, illustrates the close link between the wood culture discourse and broader issues about the uniqueness of Japanese culture (Akioka, 1977: 180). It is quite common to contrast the typical wooden tableware and table manners of the Japanese with the metal utensils of the Koreans and Chinese. Thus, the Japanese are said to drink soup out of wooden bowls that they hold in their hands, while Koreans eat out of metal bowls with a spoon (Ishige, 1996: 8).

A more plausible explanation for the necessity of a wooden *Ōtorii* might be sought in the fact that the Itsukushima Shrine and its *Ōtorii* are registered as National Treasures and that recently the complex as a whole became a UNESCO World Heritage site. Listed buildings have to comply with strict regulations concerning the materials used for their restoration and the *Ōtorii* has to be built from camphor tree wood. It used to be common practice in Japan to nurture trees for future reconstruction in the grounds of shrines, temples and schools. The most famous example of this can be found at the Grand Ise Shrine, where a forest of cypress trees is grown on several mountain ranges owned by the shrine in order to make it possible to rebuild the whole structure every twenty years (Yano, 1992: 231-5). Similarly, in the past, trees on the island were probably used for reparation works on the Itsukushima shrine and *Ōtorii*. As we have seen above, at the end of the nineteenth century, the new Meiji government, influenced by western ideas of conservation, introduced strict regulations to protect Japan's cultural and natural treasures. As a result, Miyajima became a protected park and trees could no longer be cut. Moreover, the fact that old, tall trees can no longer be cut down because they are either considered sacred trees or are turned into 'natural treasures' has added to the difficulty of finding appropriate trees in Japan.

The difficulties surrounding the reconstruction of the wooden *Ōtorii* is emblematic of the crisis in the Japanese wood industry in general (Knight, 1998). In the next section, I will return to the shamoji and focus on strategies contemporary shamoji makers employed to overcome the scarcity of wood.

⁸ Totman, for example, has demonstrated that the dependency of pre-modern Japanese on wood as a building material was linked with the difficulty of transporting other appropriate materials and the scarcity of clay to make bricks with (Totman, 1995: 110-1)

3. Shamoji Producers and Wood Discourses

We have seen that laws prohibiting forestry on Miyajima influenced the shamoji business at the beginning of the last century. However, it was only after WW 2 when the production of shamoji became mechanised that drastic changes occurred. The Miyajima shamoji changed from an item manufactured by a large number of wood craftsmen in the service of wholesale dealers to a machine-made product made by a handful of shamoji makers in small factories.⁹ The relationship between the wholesaler and the craftsman weakened. Craftsmen began to buy their own wood and wholesalers built their own shamoji factories. I will now consider four shamoji craftsmen and Miyachū, the number one shamoji wholesale company in Japan

Today, two types of shamoji are produced by two different groups of craftsmen on Miyajima. Flat, board-shaped shamoji made of cheap woods such as cypress, locally referred to as '*batchi-shamoji*', are produced with machines in small family businesses, such as the Kigami and Oda shamoji factory (Plate 2.1 + Plate 2.2). The second type of shamoji has a smooth rounded handle and lightly curved head. I will call these '*tokujō-shamoji*' (high quality shamoji), a term used in the catalogue of the Miyachū shamoji wholesale company discussed below. *Tokujō-shamoji* are, commonly, made of expensive, rare wood such as mulberry and zelkova.¹⁰ Because the handle is rounded and the surface is smoothed the shape of this shamoji is more ergonomic. The production of these scoops is more labour intensive because the sanding of the surface is done manually. Mr. Kikugawa and Mr. Fujii are shamoji makers who each invented their own version of the *tokujō-shamoji*. I will return to this categorisation in Chapter 5 on the retailing of shamoji.

Kigami Yūji, who was born in 1929, comes from a family of shamoji makers. Three generations of Kigamis produced shamoji by hand. Mr. Kigami specialises in the production of giant shamoji, which he calls 'signboard shamoji' (*kanban jakushi*). The different uses of enlarged shamoji will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 3 and 6. Because giant shamoji are only made on request, Mr. Kigami, additionally, produces small board-shaped shamoji with machines.

⁹In 1993, Miyake Ganjiro, the last craftsman that made shamoji by hand, passed away aged eighty-one. Today, shamoji said to be made by Mr. Miyake are on sale for as much as ten thousand yen (fifty pounds).

¹⁰ Zelkova trees were considered sacred trees to which people directed prayers, for example for safety during childbirth. This wood is still used as a building material for temples and houses. Mulberry trees, planted in Japan since the end of the nineteenth century, are believed to combat paralysis and are used as medicine. Utensils and tableware such as pestles or chopsticks made of this wood are said to assure good health and longevity (personal communication Okazaki).



Plate 2.1: Shamoji are produced with machines in a local factory.



Plate 2.2: More than 3000 flat, board-shaped shamoji are manufactured each day in the factory.

Mr. Kigami recalls how all shamoji used to be made of nettle trees (*hō no ki*), but now this tree is almost extinct and therefore very expensive. Furniture makers, for example, still use this wood. For his large shamoji, he uses a sort of Paulownia tree called *sen no ki*, while small shamoji are made of a kind of cypress called *sawaraki*.

In Mr. Kigami's shamoji factory (1) With a red marker the shape of shamoji is drawn on pieces of wood cut to a certain thickness. (2) These forms are cut out with an electrical saw. (3) Next, the surface of the shamoji is polished with machines. (4) The Miyajima stamp is burned in the wood of the handle and decorative slogans may be printed on the head. (5) Finally, the shamoji are wrapped and packed for distribution. Mrs. Kigami also works in the shamoji factory, but she is only involved in the finishing touches of small shamoji. She prints good luck wishes on the wooden surface of some shamoji and wraps and packs them before distribution. Mr. Kigami does not distribute his product via a wholesaler but delivers directly to souvenir shops on Miyajima.

The Oda family has produced machine-made, *batchi-shamoji* for thirty years. Mr. Oda Tsuneichi, in his fifties, began to work as a shamoji maker twenty-five years ago in the business of his father. In two small factories on the island shamoji for daily use, signboard-shamoji and shamoji with petitions written on them are fabricated in a variety of sizes. Mr. Oda, together with his wife and his mother, produce approximately one thousand shamoji a day. Mr. Oda operates the saw machine while his wife and mother work behind a polishing machine. Shamoji made at the Oda factory are not sold on Miyajima, but are distributed all over Japan via a wholesaler who adds decorations and wraps them.

These two shamoji makers involved in the mechanical production of *batchi-shamoji* see their future with foreboding. The following words of Mr. Oda summarise their concerns:

Well, you know, over the past ten years the wood has become more and more expensive. Because it is difficult to raise the price of shamoji, business is not going well. I guess we will be in production only for a few more years.

Long-term deforestation has led to scarcity of all types of wood in Japan. Consequently, the price of wood continues to rise. The scarcity of the wood is also a major concern for craftsmen involved in the other three Miyajima woodcrafts. Mr. Hirokawa, a craftsman in his late forties who specialises in woodcarvings, for example, emphasises the fact that craftsmen have to pay high

transportation costs for the delivery of their wood. Both shamoji factories on Miyajima discussed above face similar problems. In the past, wood was supplied from the nearby Chugoku region, but these days it is delivered from northern Japan, for example from Akita Prefecture or Hokkaido. Kigami further points out that shamoji makers from Fukushima Prefecture in northern Japan, an area where trees are more abundant, benefit from the crisis in shamoji production on Miyajima because they are able to distribute their shamoji through Miyajima.

On the other hand, the following two craftsmen under discussion, Mr. Kikugawa and Mr. Fujii, produce a small quantity of a high quality shamoji and are doing relatively well. Both have invented their own version of the Miyajima shamoji. Approximately thirty years ago, Mr. Kikugawa, who is in his sixties, began producing *batchi-shamoji* by machine, but gradually he changed to more ergonomically shaped shamoji. He is said to have invented the first *tokujō-shamoji* more than thirty years ago (Plate 2.3 -2). He explains why he began to produce this kind of shamoji in the following way:

You know, in the past people took care of these things [the shape], but then it became worse and worse. Because of the price competition, they increasingly began to make bad quality shamoji. So, in the end these shamoji [*batchi*] didn't sell anymore. Well, then, I invented this shape [*tokujō*] because I wanted to sell a product of high quality and it sold quite well. This was something like thirty years ago. Before that there was only this kind of shamoji [points at flat board-shaped shamoji]. Yes, it seems that I was the first at that time.

Mr. Kikugawa criticises the *batchi-shamoji* because in his view the overproduction of these low quality scoops led to the overall decrease of shamoji sales. The fact that he began to produce a scoop made from high quality wood with rounded shape some thirty years ago might be linked with the rise of the Japanese craft movement from the 1960s, and also the development of a general nostalgia for authentic Japanese things.

In a small factory at the back of his house, Mr. Kikugawa, together with another craftsman, produces approximately one hundred shamoji a day. He mainly sells his goods in souvenir shops on Miyajima, but occasionally he also supplies a few craft shops in Hiroshima City. His shamoji made of mulberry and zelkova wood, come in two sizes, and are the most popular products in the Shamoji House, a speciality souvenir shop in the shopping arcade on Miyajima (see Chapters 4 and 5). The high quality wood Mr. Kikugawa uses is collected from all over Japan. He explained that because these trees only grow naturally in the mountains, they can not be cut down that easily. Both zelkova and mulberry trees have a long growth cycle and in order to retain the natural balance, foresters have to operate a selective system of deforestation. Evergreen trees have

been increasingly replaced by plantations of cedar (*sugi*) and cypress (*hinoki*)¹¹ that grow faster and can be cut down quicker. However, this policy has destroyed the natural diversity of Japanese forests and had led to ecological problems and health hazards such as cedar allergies. This development worries him of course, but because he produces exclusive durable goods in small quantities, which are mainly sold on Miyajima island, he can ask a higher price. Moreover, his shamoji appeal to young female consumers concerned with health and environmental issues, who are often willing to pay more for better quality.

Mr. Fujii, born in 1947, specialises in the production of *tokujō-shamoji* and shamoji-shaped kitchen utensils made of cherry tree wood. His grandfather began making wooden trays, but already by 1927 the focus of the family business's had shifted to shamoji. Today, ten people work in a small factory behind the family house on Miyajima where three hundred shamoji are produced a week. Only the last part of the production process is manual. At the moment, Mr. Fujii produces two types of *tokujō-shamoji*. The formal characteristics of the first type are smooth head and a short round handle that resembles a paint brush (Plate 2.3 - 3). The second *tokujō-shamoji* he produces is what he calls the *shinsei-shamoji*, literally, 'new-shape-shamoji' with a long straight handle (Plate 2.3 - 4).

Mr. Fujii is an inventive man who continuously experiments with new products in accordance with the changing life styles of the Japanese. In the past thirty years, he has invented more than four hundred different types of scoop-like utensils. In the following extract, he talks about his drive to keep on producing new things:

Q: Can you see big changes over time in the sales of your products, for example say over the past ten years?

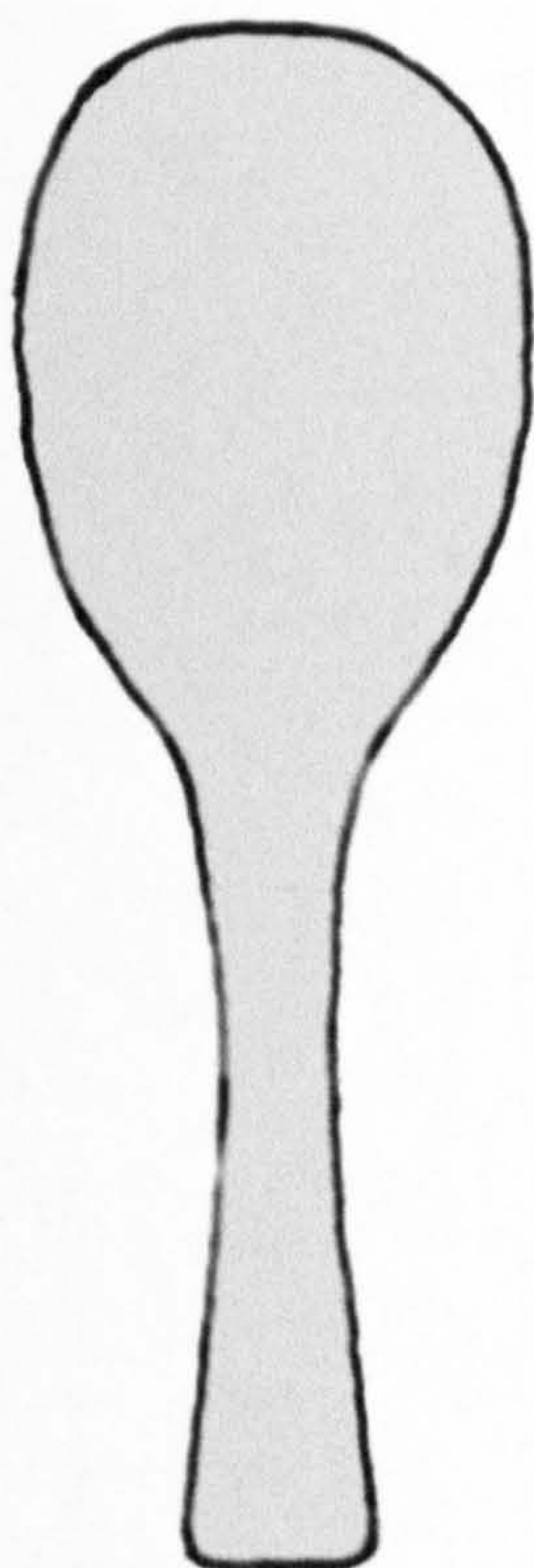
A: Well, even if you consider ten years, at my place new things are continuously produced.

Q: Do you come up with something new every year?

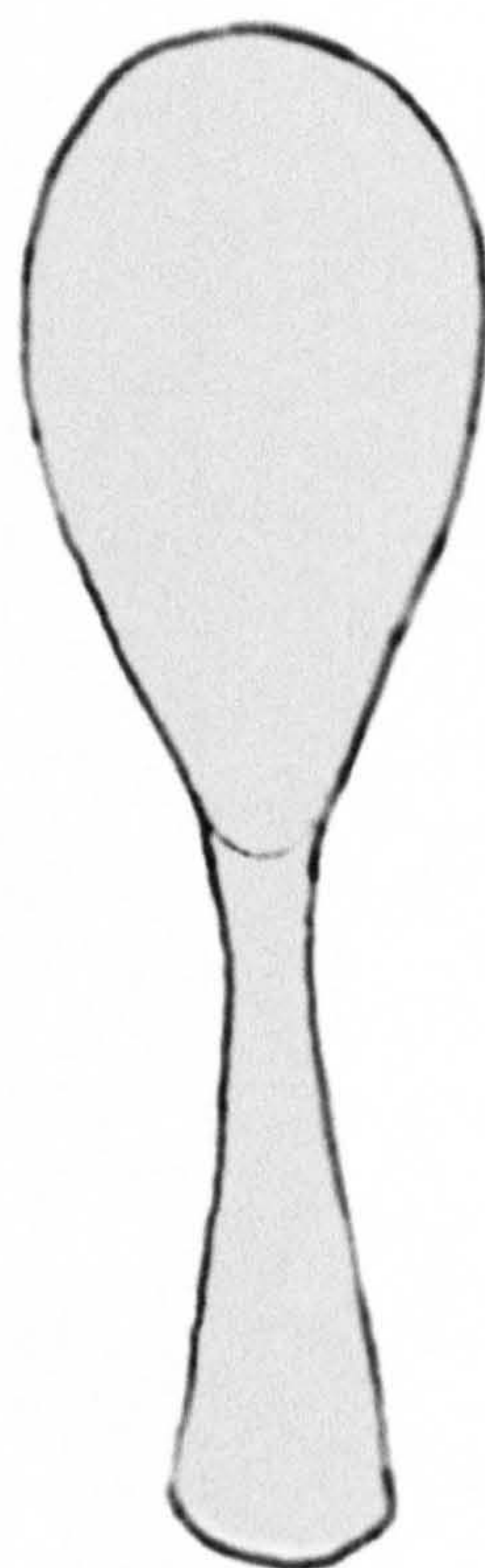
A: Yes, well, I don't know which one comes first, but products stop being sold. Then, I think, let's make something, we need to make something else. It is necessary to produce new things. So, customers, for example, will tell me, can't you make this kind of thing? Then, I might make things with their demands in mind.

His wife's trials in the kitchen, and also images of kitchen utensils made in the past and in other countries are shown in magazines, on TV and in exhibitions are a source of inspiration. For example, he copied a soup ladle, more than 4000 years old, found in an archaeological site.

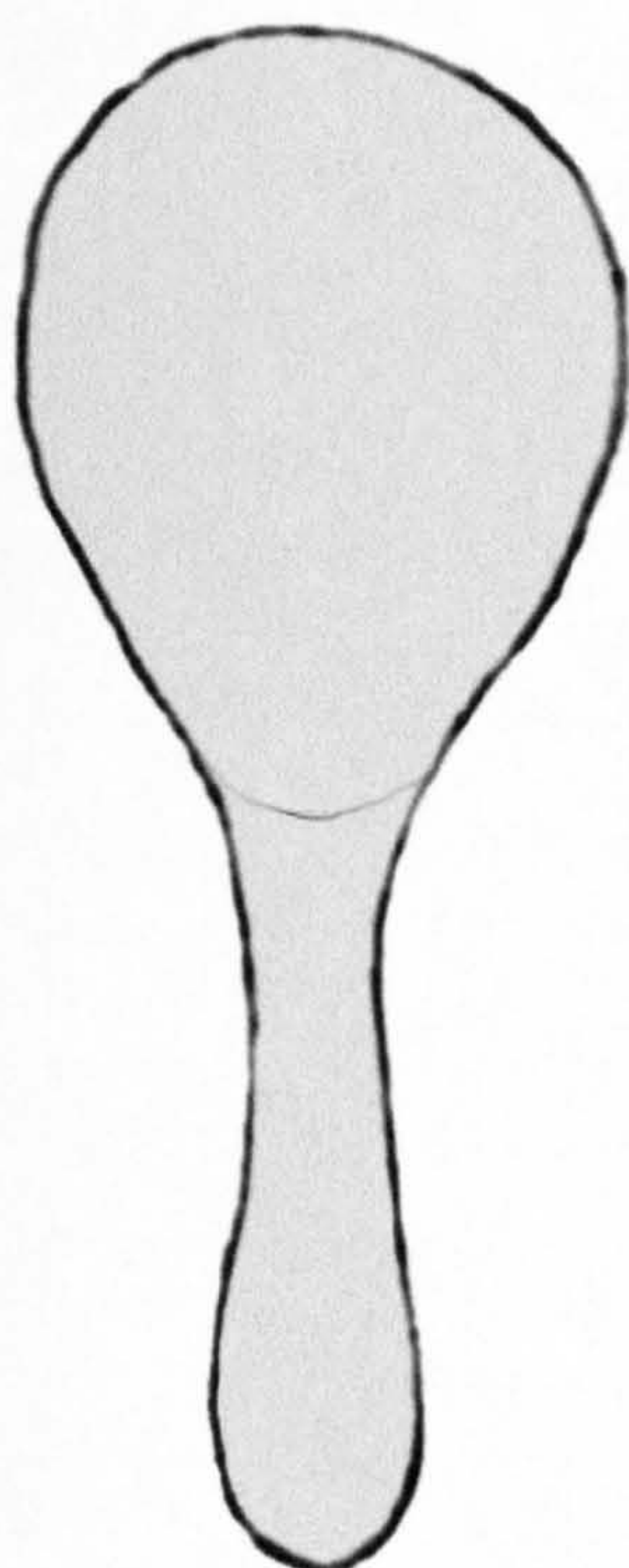
¹¹ The development of plantations of cedar and cypress trees to increase timber had already started in the nineteenth century (Totman, 1995: 104).



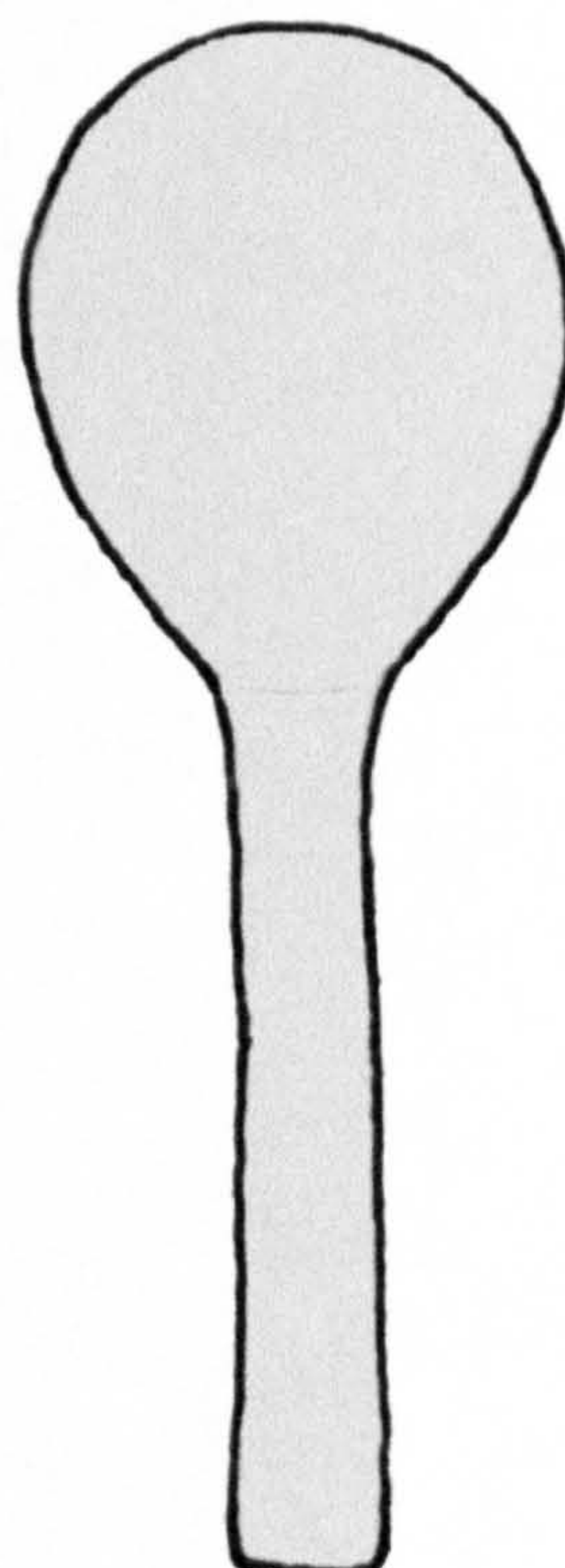
1: Standard



2: Kikugawa



3: Fujii a



4: Fujii B

Plate 2.3: Mr. Kikugawa and Mr. Fujii have invented their own types of shamoji.

Mr. Fujii's crafts are displayed in various exhibitions nation-wide, for example, in the Craft Centre Japan Exhibition, a touring display shown in the Maruzen bookstore chain. In spring 1997, I saw some of his scoops exhibited in Maruzen in central Kyoto. He also displayed work in the Miyajima Modern Style exhibition organised by the Miyajima Woodcrafts Co-operative in Hiroshima in March 1999. Apart from a range of scoop-like kitchen utensils produced by Mr. Fuji, other innovative products such as wooden exercise weights, containers shaped like women's breasts or special spoons for people with a disability were on display.

Mr. Fujii's main concern is not the scarcity of the wood. He argues that the competition from cheap wooden kitchen utensils imported from Taiwan and China, where labour is much cheaper, is much more of a threat. Similarly, Mr Takashi, a Miyajima craftsman in his sixties who produces small wooden turnery objects, criticises cheap imports from China. He believes that it is mainly young, inexperienced wood craftsmen who are affected by Chinese imports. At the beginning of their career such craftsmen will only be able to make simple things, similar to those imported from China, but they can not compete with the extremely low Chinese prices.

I have compared two groups of shamoji makers on Miyajima. First, those producing large quantities of cheap *batchi-shamoji* with machines and second those manufacturing small quantities of high quality scoops with a manually sanded surface. On Miyajima, the *batchi-shamoji* is increasingly being replaced by the latter type of shamoji. However, in stores all over Japan, the *batchi-shamoji* is still common. Mr. Fujii argues that the renown of the board-shaped Miyajima shamoji is due to its mass production and distribution nation-wide by the Miyachū shamoji-wholesale company. Indeed, a quick look at the 1999 product catalogue of Miyachū sent to wholesalers nation-wide, reveals that the flat board-shaped shamoji, referred to by the president of the company as 'standard' shamoji, is their main product. I will now turn to the Miyachū shamoji wholesale company, the biggest producer and distributor of shamoji in Japan.

4. Miyachū: A Shamoji Wholesale Company

The first entry in the bankbooks of the Miyachū Company dates from 1751. Originally the company dealt in rice, grains and money exchange, but since the nineteenth century its focus shifted to wholesaling shamoji.

A promotional leaflet from 1910 shows a picture of the original Miyachū storehouse on Miyajima with the text: 'The Miyazato Chūheiei, wholesale company in miscellaneous kitchenware and local specialities from Miyajima'. President Miyazato clarified how during the wars of 1895-6 against China and 1905-6 against Russia many shamoji craftsmen from Miyajima were either drafted into the army or put to work in the munitions industry. The Miyachū craftsmen formed a unit, called the Miyazato loyal garrison (*Miyazato Chūheiei*), that worked as shipbuilders at the nearby port of Hiroshima. Mr. Miyazato explained that 'Miyachū' is a contraction of *miya*, the first part of his family name Miyazato, and *chū* (loyal, honest) the first part of *chūheiei* (loyal garrison).

Miyachū delivered wood to craftsmen in its service, collected their finished products and distributed them to other wholesalers. At the beginning of this century, the company employed approximately three hundred craftsmen and was distributing shamoji to the major urban centres in Japan. Mr. Miyazato claims his forefathers were the first to export shamoji to the Kansai region (Osaka, Kobe, Kyoto). An English translation of the text written on the promotional leaflet from 1910, introduced above, suggests that Miyachū also exported its products to the West. This confirms the Japanese historian Miyamoto's view that at the beginning of the last century, wooden products, for example, spoons, hat-racks and coffee plates, were manufactured on Miyajima especially for the foreign market (Miyamoto and Kanzaki, 1972: 63). Mr. Murakami, a Miyajima wood craftsman in his sixties, told me that his father also operated a wholesale company that exported wooden products to the U.S. A pamphlet from the Taisho period (1912-26) shows a whole range of products, such as candy boxes, cigarette sets or neck-tie holders, produced for the American market by turnery craftsmen working for the Murakami wholesale company.¹²

Mr Miyazato shares the pessimistic views expressed by Mr. Kigami and Mr. Oda about the future of businesses engaged in mechanical production of *batchi-shamoji* on Miyajima. He gives several possible explanations, some of which have been mentioned before, for the current crisis. A major factor in the past as in the present is the decreased availability of wood. The expenses of the shamoji makers increased because wood commonly used for shamoji became scarce and because transportation costs increased. Secondly, the low marketability of shamoji makes it difficult to raise prices in the shops. Finally, he points at the lack of interest in the profession from the next generation and this is exactly because of the low profitability of shamoji. Next, we will

see how, through relocation, modernisation and diversification of the production, Miyachū was able to create a range of new possibilities and a future for the Miyajima shamoji.

The Miyachū wholesale company was situated on Miyajima for nearly two hundred years, but in October 1979 it was relocated to Miyajimaguchi, on the mainland across the bay. Miyazoto Yasuteru, who was born in 1933, is the fifth generation of Miyazatos leading the company. The decision to move to the mainland was made because of the increasing difficulties involved in doing business from a small island.

Because Miyajima is a popular tourist spot with many historical monuments and other attractions, it was impossible to modernise the management and expand the company. In January 1980, an article about the move of the company to the mainland was published in the Chūgoku Newspaper printed in Hiroshima entitled: *'Departure from the island. Not being content in the traditional environment anymore. Doing business on the mainland while bonds with Miyajima remain'*. The article explains that relocation was necessary for pragmatic reasons, cited above, but that the historical bond between Miyachū, Miyajima and the shamoji would remain. Today, thirty-five employees are working in a concrete building three times bigger than the former wooden storehouse on Miyajima. A number of small shamoji factories, located near to the Miyachū head offices produce *batchi-shamoji* exclusively for Miyachū. The Matsumoto factory, similar in size to the Kigami and Oda family businesses, for example, produces some two thousand board-shaped shamoji a day.

Although Miyachū mainly portrays itself as a shamoji wholesale dealer, a variety of other kitchen utensils, wooden and plastic, are included among their products. The Miyachū product catalogue for 1999, for example, advertises a variety of spatula, ladles, turners, and also pestles, cutting boards and walking sticks (Plate 2.4). The majority of souvenir shops on Miyajima sell Miyachū products, but Miyachū also operates its own souvenir shop called Joifuru Miyajima. I will discuss the distribution of shamoji in souvenir shops on Miyajima in Chapters 4 and 5. In this chapter, I want to focus on the network of distribution channels through which Miyachū products are sold nation-wide in supermarkets, home centres, and department stores.

¹² Around 1970, this company was closed down because it could no longer compete with cheap plastic products.



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創業200年の伝統に基づく品位ある製品の数々。



200年以上に及ぶ長い伝統に培われた技術と製法による自然の香りにあふれた
木製品の数々……

この天然木の気品に満ちた素朴な味わいは、ひとときの憩いを与えてくれ、明
るく楽しいキッチンライフを約束してくれる事でしょう。

Plate 2.4: The cover page of the Miyachu Catalogue for 1999.

During the period 1996-97, for example, Miyachū shamoji were on sale in Takashimaya and Vivre, department stores in Kyoto. Moreover, via middlemen, the range of Miyachū kitchen utensils is also exported abroad, mainly to the US. Mr. Miyazato told me that when he went to visit his son in Philadelphia he found Miyachū pestles on sale in a local hardware store.

Traditionally, Miyachū mainly distributed *batchi-shamoji* to retailers outside Miyajima. However, in recent years, department stores and other speciality stores have chosen to offer a broader range of shamoji. In the Miyachū product catalogue for 1999, the more expensive *tokujō-shamoji* are on offer in two different sizes and three different woods. These shamoji are especially produced for the Miyachū wholesale company, but Miyachū also distributes two types of high quality shamoji made by Mr Fujii, one of the craftsmen discussed above. Mr. Fujii also delivers directly to two souvenir shops on Miyajima, but he mainly sells his goods to shops nation-wide via wholesalers such as Miyachū. His range of shamoji and other kitchen utensils made from cherry tree wood sell extremely well in high quality stores frequented by younger women such as the Orenji House and Croissant, a chain of household good stores linked with a popular cooking magazine of the same name.

Mr Miyazato, the president of Miyachū, argues that urban consumers have different expectations concerning shamoji depending on the type of shop where they are sold (Chapter 4). A distinction is made between places where cheap kitchen utensils for everyday use are on sale, such as supermarkets and home centres, and shops where expensive high quality shamoji are offered such as department stores. I will continue looking at how, through shamoji sales, Miyachū targets a young urban audience with spending power in Tokyū Hands, a well-known department store with branches nation-wide.

Miyachū is the main supplier of shamoji to Tokyū Hands. The branch located in Hiroshima City generally offers a broad selection of Miyachū shamoji and kitchen utensils, but during February and March 1999 the kitchen utensils department put together a special display of Miyajima shamoji. Mr. Matsumoto, an employee in his late twenties who was responsible for the shamoji display, told me that every six months he organises a display around a different theme. He decided to put together the exhibition of shamoji to inform customers about the link between shamoji and Miyajima, its place of origin and the biggest producer of shamoji in Japan. He wanted to offer customers the broadest range of shamoji possible. This large choice is, as we will see in

Chapter 4, a characteristic of high quality shops and is seen as a kind of service to the customer. Moreover, the shamoji display also informs customers about the history of the scoop, the variety of its materials and its applications. This tunes in with the traditional role of the department store as a source of information and education in Japan (Chapter 1). The best-selling shamoji in Hiroshima's Tokyū Hands are the comparatively cheap cypress shamoji (600 yen or 3 pounds). However, more expensive *tokujō-shamoji* made of zelkova or mulberry wood (1000 yen or 5 pounds) also sell well. Overall, wooden shamoji are selling much better than the plastic ones and in Mr. Matsumoto's view this is because the latter are available everywhere, for example, in Home Centres nation-wide.

As well as the high cost of wood, the low marketability of shamoji and the strong competition from cheap Chinese and Taiwanese imports have been blamed for the current crisis in the production of wooden shamoji. A final reason, frequently cited by wood craftsmen, is the increased use of plastic shamoji, mainly those that come free with the purchase of an electrical rice cooker.

5. Plastic Shamoji and Taste

During my investigation into shamoji sales in supermarkets, local hardware stores and department stores in urban areas, I became aware of the existence of another big player in the shamoji market: the Nakaya plastic shamoji factory, located in Nagoya City. Mr. Nakatani Satoru, the president of Nakaya who is in his late forties, explained that his company was founded during the sixties when there was an increased demand for plastic goods in Japan. From the start, the company produced plastic household goods for daily use such as bowls, cups and chopsticks. Approximately ten years ago the focus shifted to the production of shamoji. Mr. Nakatani explained his choice for shamoji saying:

Tastes change very fast. When one produces one 'hit product,' one must already be thinking about the next. Keeping up is really difficult. In a way we must always watch out for something that may be a hit. Well, all Japanese need to use shamoji daily, so it is a product that will always sell well.

Plastic shamoji have been around since the sixties, but in Mr. Nakatani's view these were overall low quality goods. Instead, the Nakaya Company began to produce shamoji from processed fluorine, a material having the advantage that the rice does not stick to it.

In the Nakaya factory, two types of plastic shamoji in four different sizes are made:¹³ firstly, white shamoji made out of one cast with a rounded shape; and secondly, a new model with a straightened head and a coloured round handle. According to Mr. Nakatani, the latter type of shamoji with red, yellow, pink or turquoise coloured handles are more expensive but very popular with young people.

Mr. Nakatani repeatedly distinguished his plastic shamoji from those that come as gifts with electrical rice cookers. He claimed that these are bad quality shamoji made in China or other Asian countries where production costs are much lower. At the beginning of the 1970s the Matsushita Electronics Co-operation was the first company to distribute a free plastic shamoji with each electrical rice cooker made (see Chapter 7). The plastic shamoji of the Matsushita Company are not made abroad, as Mr. Nakatani claims, but are produced locally by a small supplier of plastic parts.

Mr. Ohashi, the head engineer of the technology unit, told me they decided to add plastic shamoji because

Wooden shamoji were so ordinary, and there was a demand for more useful utensils which rice doesn't stick to. We didn't consider wooden scoops appropriate gifts because it is preferable to have a rational product to accompany industrially produced goods.¹⁴

The stress placed on the high-tech, modern properties of plastic in the quote above should be seen within the context of the overall positive attitude towards plastic in Japanese society during the 1960s and 70s.¹⁵ In a recent publication, which traces the cultural history of Tupperware, for example, Alison Clarke (1999) has pointed at the huge success of plastic containers in Japan. In 1965, for example, Japanese Tupperware sales were twice as high as those in the US, although Americans had at that time a much higher income per capita (Clarke, 1999: 190-1).

¹³Ten people work in the Nakaya factory, but since the production process is fully computerised they are mainly engaged in the packaging of shamoji. When I visited the factory in July 1997, a woman in her sixties was the only employee working in the main hall where the machines are placed. Her job consists of removing any irregular shapes and placing the final products in boxes.

¹⁴I was told that deforestation and the decreasing availability of wood was another important incentive for their choice of plastic.

¹⁵The Japanese proclivity for plastic can be traced back much earlier to the beginning of the twentieth century. Akiko Takehara, for example, in a historical study about the world-wide use of plastic (Takehara, 1993), points at the way the Japanese embraced plastic after its introduction from the US at the beginning of the last century. She gives the example of American blue eyed plastic dolls that were imported in great numbers in 1911. However, by 1913, Japan had emerged as the biggest exporter of plastic toys in the world.

In the western world, plastic has been frequently equated with mass production, kitsch and inauthenticity. However, these views are largely based on aesthetic prejudices expressed by an elite of art critics and like-minded people (Binkley, 2000). Conversely, the same elite has occasionally endowed plastic with authenticity too. Again, Clarke's (1999) Tupperware containers serve as an interesting example. She clearly demonstrates how, during the 1950s, the utility and beauty of these plastic objects was celebrated by an elite of modernist designers, modern art enthusiasts and so on. While Tupperware was celebrated for its simplicity and pure form, other plastic goods decorated with colourful patterns or plastic imitations of other materials such as ivory were denoted as bad taste and kitsch (Clarke, 1999: 49).

Returning to Japan, in the period after WW2, plastic was embraced by the masses but an elite of academics, cultural critics and popular figures propagated a discourse about wood, tradition and Japaneseness, which I have alluded to above. They lauded the functional, healthy and aesthetic qualities of wood as opposed to the negative properties of plastic and other industrial materials. The development of the Japanese folk craft (*mingei*) movement during the 1960s and 70s should be seen within this context. In his study of a Japanese potters community, Moeran has shown how this mainly urban-based movement, influenced by the British Arts and Crafts movement, idealised the countryside where people were supposed to live in harmony with nature. The social and aesthetic ideal of the countryside was opposed to mass produced commodities and the general alienation associated with industrialisation and urbanisation (Moeran, 1997).

The Japanese taste for things plastic continued during the eighties characterised by high economic growth and conspicuous consumption (Hendry, 1993: 10-12). My own ethnographic data collected among urban consumers during the nineties indicates the widespread use of plastic utensils, tableware and other household goods in Japan. However, the economic crisis at the beginning of the nineties was followed by a general nostalgia for tradition and crafts (Skov and Moeran, 1995:11). Moreover, influenced by environmental concerns some Japanese consumers, especially younger women, have begun to use natural materials such as wood and bamboo in their kitchens (Skov, 1995). In Chapter 5 about discourses concerning shamoji in souvenir shops, I will further explore this topic.

At the moment, Mr. Nakatani's annual shamoji sales are worth three million yen, and it is his objective to become the number one producer of plastic shamoji in Japan.¹⁶ It seems that he is well on his way to accomplishing this goal. Nakaya shamoji are distributed to wholesalers in Nagoya, Osaka and Tokyo. I saw Nakaya shamoji with coloured handles on sale in department stores in Kyoto, Osaka and Tokyo. I found an example of the success of Nakaya in Utensils Street in Osaka City, where shops trading in everyday kitchen utensils, pottery, and all sorts of items for food preparation and consumption are lined up. The majority of these shops sell wooden Miyachū shamoji, but plastic shamoji sold in the same street are mainly produced by Nakaya.

This brings our discussion back to the Miyajima shamoji and Miyachū. Interestingly enough, these days Miyachū also produces plastic shamoji. During the 1980s one of the vice-presidents of Miyachū invented the polythene shamoji with anti-bacterial coating (see Chapter 5). The shape of this plastic shamoji was designed by Miyachū, but the manufacturing is carried out by the Tokyo based Shinameni Company, which specialises in the production of plastic objects. Mr. Miyazato concludes that

although plastic shamoji can be made easily anywhere in Japan, Miyachū's plastic shamoji are selling better because the company can build on the image of Miyajima as the shamoji island.

Mr. Miyazato's words urge us to question if wood is as significant a physical property of the shamoji as suggested in Chapter 1. According to the myth of origin of the shamoji, the power in the island is transmitted through the wood of sacred trees growing there. The following analysis of the iconography of the contemporary Miyajima shamoji indicates the importance of trademarks that mark the link between shamoji and the island.

6. Discussion: Embodied Stamps, Trademarks and Authenticity

Shamoji made of a variety of materials that are distributed on the island have the word 'Miyajima' burned with an iron stamp on their handle (Plate 2.5). We do not know when exactly this custom developed, but judging from old photographs it must have happened sometime at the beginning of the twentieth century. Whatever the case, this chapter has demonstrated that deforestation was prohibited on Miyajima at the end of the nineteenth century and that the wood for shamoji production had to be transported from the mainland.

¹⁶ Mr. Nakatani claims that Japanese living abroad are also a big group of consumers and Nakaya shamoji are exported to the US, South-east Asia and Korea.

By pressing the Miyajima stamp on foreign timber, the local shamoji industry was able to integrate this wood into the process of the construction of power through trees that grow on the island (see Chapter 1). In other words, the use of sacred wood faded into wood in general authenticated with specific identification marks.

Freedberg has shown that in the Christian context, words were added to reproductions taken home from pilgrimage sites to identify them or 'to encourage the devotion that is inevitably diminished by distance' (Freedberg, 1988: 120). On Miyajima, words are employed in a similar way, but the use of embodied words as identification marks should also be seen within the Japanese context. Through Buddhism, the Japanese adopted the Chinese writing system consisting of pictograms. The Chinese have a strong notion of writing as the 'embodiment of power, authority, culture, and antiquity'. Moreover, in Chinese creation myths, writing is associated with the divine and creative forces in the universe (Kuo, 1992:18). In Chapter 6 I will analyse the way written words are seen as embodiments of power in east Asia. Here, suffice it to say that writing down the name of a deity is considered to represent that deity (Holm, 1994: 215 / Stevens, 1981: 32). This practice explains how writing or printing the Chinese characters for Miyajima, which literally means 'island where the gods reside', on a shamoji can invest it with the sacred power of the Island.

These days, it remains common to press an iron stamp with the Chinese characters for Miyajima engraved on the wood to authenticate shamoji. Stamps or seals have a long history as devices of authentication within east Asia. Since two thousand BC seals have been symbols of ownership, political and religious authority, and indicators of the authenticity of official documents in China. Personal seals depicting aesthetised pictograms of the owner's name were common, while seals with auspicious inscriptions, for example, were worn as amulets and were buried with their owners (Kuo, 1992: 20 / Chang, 1976: x). In contemporary east Asia the seals continue to play a significant role in every daily life. In Japan, for example, official organisations such as universities, companies and temples utilise a seal in formal transactions, while individuals require a seal in order to open a bank account or to authenticate official documents.¹⁷

¹⁷Their importance in Japanese society is further illustrated by memorial services for used seals. In April 1997, I attended such a ceremony at the Shimogawa Shrine in Kyoto.

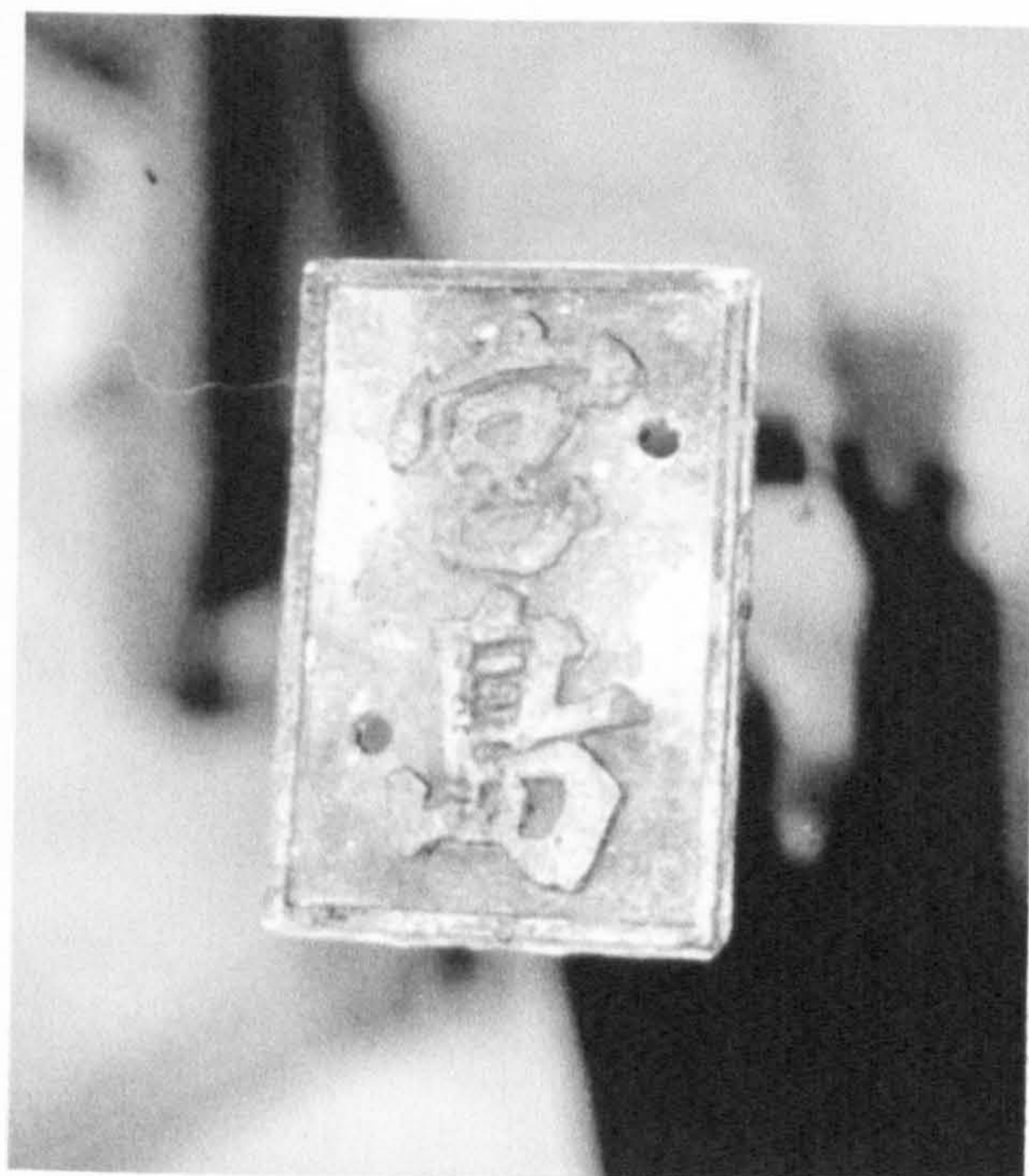


Plate 2.5: The iron Miyajima stamp.



Plate 2.6: A Miyachu employee burns the Miyajima stamp into a shamoji.

The sophisticated designs of Chinese pictograms engraved into the compact space of seals and stamps¹⁸ bear a striking resemblance to contemporary forms of graphic symbolism such as the logo.¹⁹ In his comparative study of the Nazi Swastika and the logo, Quinn distinguishes between marks that link the maker to his product via its physical properties and the logo, linked with corporate identity, which represents abstract or psychological values (Quinn, 1994: 112). This distinction echoes Marx's claim that commodities are abstractions given psychological qualities that feed on the alienation between workers and their products. Returning to the shamoji, from the start the Miyajima stamp burned on the wood did not refer to the individual maker of the product (Plate 2.6). Shamoji were always mass-produced by craftsmen working in the service of wholesalers. We have seen above that proto-capitalist production methods were already widespread in Japan during the nineteenth century (Nakamura, 1990). The stamp, not unlike a corporate logo, links each shamoji with the sacred qualities of its place of origin, Miyajima.

This discussion about the Miyajima stamp tunes in with the more general question about the relationship between commodification and authenticity posed in my thesis. Does the commodification of shamoji and their distribution to major cities diminish their powers? Stanley Tambiah has pointed out that each type or batch of amulets produced by charismatic mountain monks in Thailand 'is alleged to have a special identification mark, usually a distinctive "imperfection", which ensures against fakes' (Tambiah, 1984: 219). In my case study, identification marks are not used in the same way. Shamoji are not prestige objects, but mass-produced kitchen utensils that are cheap and available to everybody.

Coombe's (1996) application of Taussig's concept of 'the mimetic faculty' (Taussig, 1993) to analyse trademarks in the turn of the century US offers some interesting insights. She argues that logos, brands, and other forms that convey meaning in commerce, are copies or imitations that have the ability to distinguish the goods that they accompany (Coombe, 1996: 205). Like a finger print, a trademark is a copy that makes goods recognisable, but at the same time it is also proof of real contact that distinguishes the copy by linking it with its originator. In our case, the Miyajima

¹⁸The graphic design of Japanese family crests is another example. In her study of the Japanese kimono, Dalby, for example, defines the Japanese family crest as 'a stylised motif, usually within a roundel, combining the functions of heraldry, logo, and sheer design' (Dalby, 1993:182).

¹⁹Already, by the beginning of the last century, Japanese department stores such as Mitsukoshi focused on building a strong corporate identity. One of the techniques used was the branding of products. The Mitsukoshi logo was printed on products to equate the products, the store and a high quality image (Moeran, 1998: 152-3).

stamp burned into the wood of innumerable shamoji that move away from the island connects them with their place of origin and makes them easily recognisable while also distinguishing them from shamoji produced elsewhere.

We have seen that the Miyajima stamp ratifies foreign wood, mainly transported from northern Japan, which is used to produce shamoji on the island. However, these days, growing numbers of shamoji imprinted with the Miyajima stamp are no longer manufactured on the island. Some wooden Miyajima shamoji are produced in mountainous regions in northern Japan, in factories in Kyushu south of the island, or even in China, Taiwan and other places in South East Asia.²⁰ Similarly, the production of plastic Miyajima shamoji such as those manufactured for Miyachū by a company located in Tokyo may take place elsewhere. The question remains if this shift from a metonymic to a metaphoric relationship between shamoji and the island implies a reduction of the spirituality invested in the shamoji? Or does this process actually further democratise the spiritual power in the shamoji by making it even more accessible?

An increasing number of trademarks, mainly stickers, are employed to consolidate particular links between Miyajima and its shamoji. These additional markers refer to wholesale companies and religious institutions, shops and, most recently, individual craftsmen. In this chapter, I have been mainly concerned with Miyajima shamoji that are transported all over Japan via extended wholesale networks. The majority of shamoji that end up in department stores, supermarkets and hardware stores nation-wide are distributed by Miyachū, the shamoji wholesale company. Miyachū adds a sticker with its logo to all Miyajima shamoji that leave the company. The official Miyachū trademark depicts the Chinese character for a heart inside a framing square traditionally used by carpenters to make straight lines. According to president Miyazato, this logo symbolises that 'Miyachū does business with a straight heart'.²¹ By way of comparison, all plastic shamoji produced by the Nakaya Company, discussed in Section 5, carry the following trademark: . According to Mr. Nakatani, the N is taken from the first letter of Nakaya and Nakatani, his family name. The circles refer to the company's policy of 'making products perfect

²⁰ In an article published in the Chūgoku Shinbun Newspaper in March 1997, it was suggested that eighty percent of shamoji sold on Miyajima are actually produced in other Asian countries. Some of my informants pointed out that a number of shamoji on sale on Miyajima were produced in northern Japan or in Kyushu in the South, but no one seemed able to tell me more about shamoji imported from other Asian countries.

²¹ Recently the English text 'exel mind' was added under the symbol, again, in Mr. Miyazato's words, to 'make the message of the symbol understandable for foreign tourists'. The addition of a foreign language also gives the goods promoted a more exotic feel.

from beginning to end'. Both marks are corporate logos that express a set of abstract values such as honesty and excellence, which the companies concerned try to convey across to their potential customers via their shamoji. We have seen that Miyachū has the additional advantage that it can draw on more than two hundred years of association with Miyajima. Besides, Miyachū's wholesale networks have enabled the mass distribution of Miyajima shamoji and the establishment of its reputation throughout Japan.

On the island, a range of trademarks and logos that may appeal to different visitors are attached to the shamoji. Those distributed at shrines and temples, for instance, have specific marks printed on them. At the Senjōkaku, the Buddhist Sutra hall linked with the Itsukushima Shrine, shamoji have 'Senjōkaku' and the logo of the Itsukushima Shrine²² stamped onto them. In Japan, goods distributed at shrines and temples, and other items of material culture linked with a certain religious institution, such as the priests' clothing or wrapping paper and bags, commonly have the name of the shrine and/or its logo imprinted.²³ Quinn has shown that the Nazis prohibited the commercial use of the Swastika because they thought it would threaten its sacredness as a national symbol (Quinn, 1994). The communist governments of China and the former S.U., on the other hand, branded products in service of the state. Japan provides us with a more extreme example in that religious institutions are actively involved in branding goods. Shrines and temples can be compared with commercial enterprises which have developed their own brand of similar religious goods. A similar example of branding can be found in religious retailing in the US where 'Christian' represents a particular brand of religious goods (McDannell, 1995).

I agree with Bruner (1995) that authenticity is not a value inherent in an object. Power relations linked with authority and the distribution of knowledge play an important role in the creation of value. This relationship between authority and authenticity is well established within many religions. A recent article about a Maria apparition in Clearwater in the US, for example, demonstrates that within Catholicism it is still very much the authorities in Rome who declare whether or not certain experiences or objects are authentic (Vasquez and Marquardt, 2000).

²² The Itsukushima Shrine logo consists of three tortoise shells. The tortoise is considered to be an auspicious animal. Another well-known logo is the mark employed at Konpirasan, a Shrine linked with sea travel, in Kotohira on Shikoku Island. This mark means money and gold, and the colour yellow is linked to prosperity and good fortune.

²³ The name of a certain protection deity is often added as well, but this practice will be discussed in Chapter 3 where I will focus on writing and the embodiment of power.

In an unpublished paper about the distribution of icons at pilgrimage sites in Poland, Kewelot (2000), similarly, points out that icons are only supposed to work after a priest has blessed them. If the same icon is bought at a nearby souvenir shop it is considered inauthentic. This is quite a contrast with the Japanese case because, as I have pointed out a few times already, those shamoji sold at temples and shrines are not considered more or less effective than those available at souvenir shops nearby.

Souvenir shops on the island also brand shamoji on sale by adding their own trademark. The Shamoji House, a shop discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, for instance, distinguishes some of its products with a sticker reading , the name of the shop written in Chinese characters. Many shops sell Mr. Kikugawa's high quality shamoji made of mulberry and zelkova wood which are only available on the Island. These shamoji are exceptional in that they carry a trademark that refers to an individual manufacturer. Only in recent years has this craftsman begun to paste a sticker with the letter 'ki' for Kikugawa written in the Japanese Hiragana alphabet on every shamoji he produces. This mark resembles what Quinn (1994) describes as the signature of the craftsman guaranteeing the quality of certain products. Interestingly enough, Mr. Kikugawa no longer considers it necessary to place the Miyajima stamp on his shamoji. Only occasionally is Miyajima printed on the handle of his shamoji and then mainly in calligraphy that further adds to the aesthetic qualities these scoops are supposed to convey. Mr. Kikugawa's products are exclusively sold on the island and we will see that they target a particular type of consumer who is willing to pay more for a personalised, special item (see Chapter 5).

I have argued that through the embodied words 'Miyajima' inscribed on them, mobile shamoji made from any kind of material can partake in the power of the island. However, Mr. Kikugawa's high quality wooden shamoji draw attention to the fact that the different contexts in which shamoji travel away from the island are of considerable importance. Neither wooden nor plastic shamoji can be defined as being more authentic per se. Plastic shamoji with the Miyajima stamps, or by extension the Miyachū sticker attached on sale in a department store in downtown Osaka, can be seen as the latest semiotic representation of the Island. However, a person who might buy this plastic Miyajima/ Miyachū shamoji from their local supermarket might not want to bring home a plastic shamoji from a trip to Miyajima.

My data shows that most tourists consider it appropriate to take home a wooden shamoji as a personal memento or gift from Miyajima. The problems related to the reconstruction of the wooden Grand Gate, discussed in Section 2 of this chapter, shows that discourses that associate authenticity with wood, Japaneseness, tradition and, by extension, the countryside play a major role in attracting tourism to the island. Section B of the thesis will analyse the set of practices and meanings attributed to shamoji within the context of tourism. The focus will be on the commercial exchanges between locals and visitors in the souvenir shops.

Section B – Tourism; Consumption and the Movement of People and Objects

- **Chapter 3 Producing and Consuming Tourist Space**
- **Chapter 4 Souvenirs: The Material Culture of Travel**
- **Chapter 5 Vocalising Souvenirs, Shamoji Discourses**

Chapter 3 Producing and Consuming Tourist Space

Time, space and technology

1. Introduction: Anthropological Theories of Tourism

Two theories, both dating back to the 1970s, have been extremely influential in the anthropological study of tourism. The first hypothesis, proposed by MacCannell (1973), argues that modern tourists are primarily driven by a quest for lost authenticity. The second theory sees tourists as contemporary pilgrims and was influenced by Turner's analysis of pilgrimage and his model of three stages of ritual processes (Turner and Turner, 1978). Turner interprets both pilgrimage and tourism as a movement from the periphery to the centre and back again which triggers a process of spatial and social separation, followed by a feeling of being out of time and place at the centre and finally a process of reintegration. This notion of modern travel as a kind of sacred state while being away from home has been, most famously, taken up and further developed by Nelson Graburn (Graburn, 1983,1989). A similar view is represented by Urry who argues that the divide between the ordinary and the extraordinary drives tourism (Urry, 1990: 11-2).

In recent years, both research traditions have been repeatedly criticised. The main arguments put forward by opponents are that not all tourism is the result of alienation (Gottlieb, 1982; Rojek, 1997) and that authenticity should be interpreted as a dynamic phenomenon (Cohen, 1988b; Bruner, 1995). The modern tourist-cum-pilgrim thesis based on ritual inversion and social reintegration has been denounced for overgeneralising the diversity of tourist practices (Cohen, 1988a; Edensor, 1998). Several researchers, on the other hand, have linked contemporary tourism with the post-modern condition, defining its main aim as the rapid consumption of empty signs and simulations (Britton, 1991). Playfulness and the search for 'the aesthetic enjoyment of surfaces' are the main characteristics attributed to the post-modern tourist (Cohen 1995:21). Others have gone as far as to suggest that travel is a continuation of everyday life, only in a more dramatised form (Rojek, 1993). Although the weaknesses of the two theories discussed above are well known, they continue to have a major impact on the study of tourism. This is, for example, apparent in the research on the material culture of travel. Objects that tourists acquire are predominantly seen as a way to authenticate their experiences, brought home as evidence of the trip (Littrell, Anderson and Brown, 1993; Blundell, 1994). Another thesis holds that souvenirs

are like charms brought home from the religious Centre (Shenhav-Keller, 1995). Chapter 4 and 5 will focus on the movements of objects that comprise tourism.

The main anthropological literature on Japanese domestic tourism also draws on the two theories mentioned above. In summary, contemporary Japanese domestic tourism has been depicted as a kind of modern ludic pilgrimage and more recently as a quest for authentic experiences among nostalgic urban Japanese. As I have mentioned above, Grabum is one of the main supporters of the notion of modern tourism as pilgrimage. In *To Pray, Pay and Play: Cultural Structure of Japanese Domestic Tourism* (Grabum, 1983) he explicitly draws on Japanese examples to prove this thesis. In Grabum's view, the intertwining of the sacred and the profane is as characteristic of Japanese domestic travel in the present as it was in the past (Grabum, 1983: 59). More recently, researchers have defined the principal stimulus for domestic tourism in Japan as a feeling of nostalgia among urban Japanese for a hometown (*furusato*). *Furusato* is a rather ambiguous term, but the following definition proposed by Creighton brings clarity:

although *furusato* once designated a person's own native hometown and the bonds with that place created through memories of childhood, the modern tourism industry suggests that any Japanese person can travel to any rural place and experience it as their own *furusato* (Creighton, 1995: 467)

According to Knight, the development of *furusato* tourism is linked with the increasing migration to the cities since the sixties that has left most of the countryside heavily depopulated. The journey of tourists to the countryside is, therefore, frequently 'expressed in the idiom of return-migration' (Knight, 1995: 229).¹

Most authors argue that *furusato-tourism* offers alienated urban Japanese an opportunity to rediscover their own past and identify with traditional Japanese values. In Ivy's view (1995), for instance, contemporary urban Japanese are haunted by a feeling of loss of cultural identity and they try to find a substitute for this severance. Tourism to the countryside is one of several strategies to fight this alienation. She explains how urbanisation and emigration resulted, on the one hand, in a search for rural roots and, on the other hand, in the construction of multiple, generic substitute hometowns of true Japaneseness located in the countryside (Ivy, 1988:104). The exchange of food parcels between rural producers and consumers in the cities similarly

¹ Knight challenges the widespread tourist as stranger/outsider thesis which is grounded in assumptions that Japan is a village society based on vertical relationships characterised by an ambivalence towards outsiders (Knight, 1995: 219-226).

builds on the feeling of nostalgia for a rural past among urbanites. Knight's study (1998) illustrates how mail order food parcels are promoted as gifts from one's hometown. The commodity exchange is personalised through an association with mother care whereby rural parents send food to urban children. Robertson (1988; 1991; 1995) draws attention to the constructing-hometowns (*furusato-zukuri*) program encouraged by the national government. She defines the program as a political project which offers possibilities to 'redefine the countryside in terms of tourism at a time when the majority of the population is disassociated from a primary relationship to the land' (Robertson, 1995: 91).

The Miyajima case study can provide evidence for both theories about Japanese domestic travel. Shrines and temples continue to be popular tourist destinations. They may either be, as in the case of the Itsukushima Shrine on Miyajima, the main aim of travel or be incorporated in the trip, for example, as part of visiting hot springs (Knight, 1996: 169). Since the 1970s, the island has also profited from the growth of *furusato* tourism. Most anthropological studies about *furusato* tourism focus on rural areas which, due to changes wrought by modernisation, have emerged as tourist destinations. Thereby, a shift took place from agriculture, forestry or fishery to tourism as the main local industry. Creighton (1995), for example, studies craft tourism in villages in the Shinshu Mountains in Nagoya Prefecture, an area once known for its silk industry. Today, seminars about silk cultivation and silk weaving attract mainly urban Japanese women. The particularity of Miyajima is that it has always been a travel destination.² The island was never fit for agriculture and fishing in the Japanese Inland Sea was not rewarding either. Consequently, Miyajima's economy has always relied on exchange networks with the outside world.³ Today, the majority of Miyajima's 2,500 inhabitants are engaged in the tourist industry. As we have seen in the introduction, in order for a place to become famous and to be recognised as such, it has to be objectified and expand outwards. Recognition is especially important in Japan where there exists a long tradition of tourists who prefer to visit generally approved places. Locally produced commodities as well as a broad range of tourist-related services are mass-produced and commercially circulated.

²The Itsukushima Shrine and the village built around it are oriented to the mainland. People were supposed to enter the sanctuary through the Grand Gate floating in the water.

³Historical sources dating back to the ninth century depict the island as a whole as a sacred place. Since the end of the fourteenth century, priests lived in temples and shrines on the island. During the fifteenth century, Miyajima became an important port in the Inland Sea trade route and a commercial town was built. In the seventeenth century, Miyajima developed into a popular travel destination and established itself as a tourist village (Okazaki, 1991).

Modern transport and communication networks that have developed since the end of the nineteenth century have played a significant role in the democratisation of travel in Japan. The Miyajima case study illustrates this. Previous to the development of the railway, transport over water was the main means of moving people and goods around the country. In 1894, a railway connection was established between Tokyo and Hiroshima, followed in 1898 by the opening of the Miyajimaguchi train station across the bay from Miyajima Island. In 1901, a permanent ferry service linked Miyajimaguchi and Miyajima. The number of visitors to Miyajima increased steadily and the tourist-related industries thrived. Today, there are two train lines with regular connections between Hiroshima City and Miyajimaguchi. Two ferry companies, JR and Matsudai, operate between Miyajima and Miyajimaguchi. In a nation-wide survey conducted in 1999, driving was listed as the second favourite leisure activity of the Japanese. More than sixty million people claimed that the car is their favourite means of transport (ASJA, 2001: 271).⁴ According to some people I spoke to on Miyajima, the fact that tourists cannot drive around in their car on the island discourages some from visiting. Visitors to Miyajima have to leave their vehicles behind in Miyajimaguchi, where the Town Office runs a huge parking lot just a few minutes away from the ferry wharf.

Rojek has pointed at the immense database available to the tourist industry as follows: 'To name but a few obvious channels of communication, it takes travel brochures, posters, anecdotes, cinema, television, fine art and advertising' (Rojek, 1997: 179). The tourist-related industries on Miyajima, similarly, draw on a broad range of communication media to advocate the island. The following description of PR activities of the Miyajima Tourist Organisation given by Mr. Hamada, the head of this organisation, illustrates this:

We go outside to advertise Miyajima. Twice a year, in summer and winter, we put together an advertising caravan. In winter, we go to Tokyo where we take part in a symposium for tourism. The event is broadcast on TV. On top of that, it is covered by many newspapers. So, we leave Miyajima to inform everybody: 'Miyajima is this kind of place'. It is all about PR. We say: 'Please visit Miyajima because if you do so you can participate in these kinds of events'. Miss Miyajima is accompanying us too. We wear Miyajima *happi* coats and hand out Momiji Manjû and shamoji. We also give away trips to Miyajima.

Statistics of the Miyajima Town Bureau for Commerce and Industry covering the period 1964 - 1999 illustrate the enormous impact of TV on tourism to the island industry (Miyajimachō shōkōkai, 1997). Until 1971, the number of visitors fluctuated between two and two and a half

⁴ The *Asahi Shinbun Japan Almanac* (2001) is an annually volume with the latest statistics about all aspects of life in Japan.

million. In 1972, the year the National Television NHK broadcast a series about the Heike clan called *Shinheike Monogatari*, which featured scenes on Miyajima, the number of visitors reached 2,700,000. During the eighties and nineties, the number of tourists steadily increased but in 1997 the figures suddenly jumped to 3,119,000 people. Firstly, at the end of 1996, the Itsukushima Shrine was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Secondly, throughout 1997, the NHK's extremely popular Epic Historical Drama focussed on the local feudal lord, Mori Motonari (1497-1571). Since 1996 tourist information related to Miyajima has been available via the Internet.

I support Rojek and Edensor's view (Rojek, 1997; Edensor, 1998) that tourism is a creative, ever-changing process whereby local producers create a multitude of opportunities with which visitors consumers actively engage (Map 3). The next section shows how, throughout history, the local community on Miyajima has drawn on a range of representations which developed at different moments of time to construct the island as a famous destination.

2. The Production of Nature and Culture Tourism

A contemporary tourist pamphlet with colourful illustrations introduces the island as: 'Miyajima: one of Japan's three most Beautiful Spots', 'History, and tradition, blue sea, verdure and mountains...replete with attractive highlights'. Miyajima exemplifies a successful intertwining of culture and nature tourism (Graburn, 1976, Moeran, 1983). The island's main attraction is the Itsukushima Shrine, the only shrine in Japan that rests on poles over the sea, and the sixteen metre high vermilion, floating Gate in front of it. Another, often stressed, alluring feature of Miyajima is the natural beauty of the Misen Mountains and the primeval forest (Chapter 2).

In his study of the Niagara Falls, Rob Shields (1991) reveals the ongoing process of image mongering surrounding tourist destinations. Today, the three basic representations of the Falls are a 'Shrine of Nature', an 'Industrial Powerhouse' and a place of 'Attractions and Spectacles'. Shields argues that no image was predominant in the history of the Falls, but a range of contradictory discourses, corresponding to various local interests, resulted in the creation of a multi-faceted popular image (Shields, 1991:146-155). Miyajima's uniqueness is, similarly, constructed around a multi-faceted changing image of the island. Today, we can distinguish three main representations of the island, which are indefinitely mixed and circulated in a variety of

Places of Historic Interest
Cultural Assets and Promenades
Full of the Beauties of Nature

Miyajima Guide Map

— on foot —

Miyajima sightseeing course

3 hr. course

Pier — Hall of Industrial Traditions of Miyajima — Mikasanohama — Itsukushima Shrine — Nishimatsubara — Aquarium — Omoto Park — Museum of Historical and Folklore Materials — Daiganji Temple — Treasure Hall — Hiramatsu Park — Momijidani Park — Five-storied Pagoda — Senjokaku

4 hr. course

Pier — Hall of Industrial Traditions of Miyajima — Mikasanohama — Itsukushima Shrine — Nishimatsubara — Aquarium — Omoto Park — Museum of Historical and Folklore Materials — Daiganji Temple — Treasure Hall — Tahoto Pagoda — Daishoin Temple — Hiramatsu Park — Momijidani Park — Five-storied Pagoda — Senjokaku

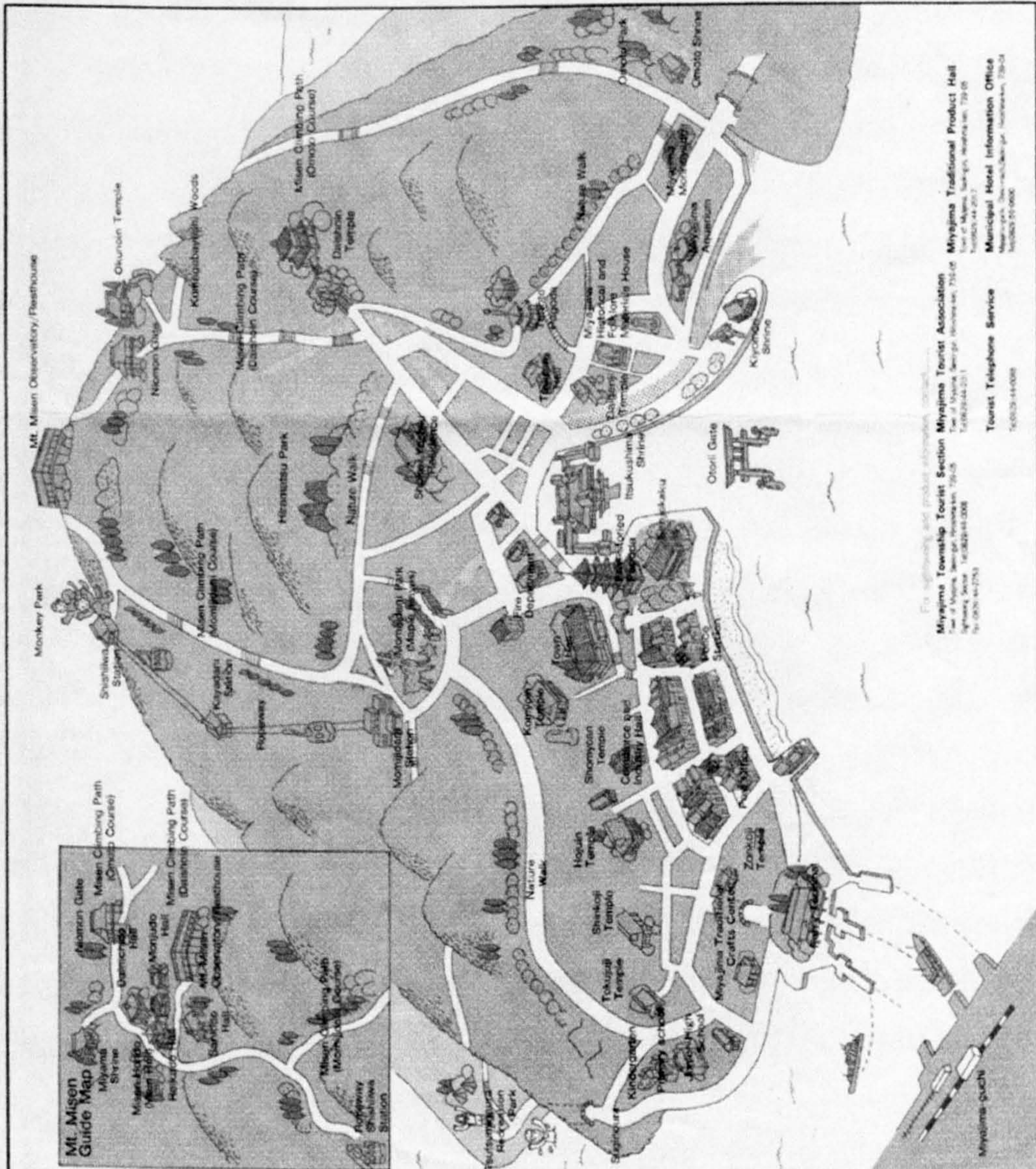
6 hr. course

Pier — Hall of Industrial Traditions of Miyajima — Mikasanohama — Itsukushima Shrine — Nishimatsubara — Aquarium — Omoto Park — Museum of Historical and Folklore Materials — Daiganji Temple — Treasure Hall — Tahoto Pagoda — Daishoin Temple — Hiramatsu Park — Momijidani Park — Ropeway — Five-storied Pagoda — Senjokaku

Miyajima Arcadia Course

Pier — Itsukushima Shrine — Museum of Historical and Folklore Materials — Aquarium — Tahoto Pagoda — Daishoin Temple — Hiramatsu Park — Momijidani Park — Five-storied Pagoda — Senjokaku

Pilgrimage to Historic Scenes of the Heike Clan Course
Itsukushima Shrine — Kiyomori Temple — Kiyozuka Mound — Treasure Hall



Map3: The free Miyajima tourist map suggesting three sightseeing courses along the major attractions.

objectifications. Firstly, Miyajima is depicted as a sacred place where awe-inspiring nature is worshipped. The notion of beautiful scenery devoid of people as empowering is grounded in ancient Shinto beliefs. Secondly, Miyajima's reputation is built on the production, distribution and consumption of rice scoops (shamoji) as famous regional products. Thirdly, a range of material forms on the island are associated with famous people in order to attract visitors.

Already, during the Tokugawa period (1603-1868) a Japanese consumer culture had developed and travel and related industries expanded rapidly (Hanley, 1997:13). As Ishimori explains, poetic images of famous locations, often shrines or temples, were turned into tourist destinations known for their natural beauty (Ishimori, 1995: 13-14). Knowledge about these places was widespread among the elite but also among commoners (Shirahata, 1995: 60). During the second half of the seventeenth century travel diaries such as '*Records of Famous Places/Sights*' (*meishoki*) were circulated nation-wide. Returning to Miyajima, a reference from 1643 names it as 'one of the three most beautiful landscapes in Japan' (*Nihon sankei*). Since the 1780s, the island has been known as a famous spot (*meisho*).

At the end of the eighteenth century, we see a change from textual to visual appropriation of famous travel destinations in Japan. In Europe, a similar shift occurred during this period (Crawshaw, 1997: 178). The cultural sites visited during the Grand Tour, popular with the English male elite during the seventeenth century, for example, became well known through their depictions in literature (Craik, 1997: 116-7). Returning to Miyajima, the first examples of the mass production of visual images⁵ used in spreading its reputation as a famous place is the *Itsukushima Illustrated Map* (*Itsukushima ezu*). These maps have been mentioned as special products from Miyajima since the end of the eighteenth century (Kōhō Miyajima, 1998).⁶ It was a printed map of the Miyajima scenery consisting of a birds-eye view composition of the Itsukushima Shrine and the surrounding town, the Misen Mountains and so on, with explanatory notes referring to, for example, place names, name festivals or the origin of the Shrine (Plate 3.1).

⁵Historical sources from 1702 already link two natural souvenirs with the Miyajima. Firstly, deer antlers that could be found on the island and secondly, more interesting for my discussion, shells with simple patterns of buildings such as the shrine, the Gateway and other natural features inscribed (Okazaki, 1991: 2).

⁶During the 1930s, with the development of photography and a nation wide post system, these maps were replaced by picture postcards of famous places.

Plate 3.1: The Itsukushima Illustrated Map was a famous souvenir from Miyajima during the eighteenth century.

Woodblock prints of the Grand Gate and the Itsukushima Shrine were distributed in large quantities during the beginning of the nineteenth century (Okazaki, 1991: 3). The Grand Gate, for example, features in a series of woodblock prints from that period by the famous master, Hiroshige, called the *Famous Views of the Provinces (shokoku meisho)*.⁷ Today, the Gate floating in the bay continues to be the best-known image linked with the island. Tourists pose for that perfect picture between cypress trees, stone lanterns and deer with the Gate in the background (Plate 3.2). The commodification of this famous icon has been extremely successful and a range of Grand Gate products in accordance with the different tastes and purchasing power of visitors is on offer. Images of the Grand Gate are printed on a variety of souvenirs ranging from Grand Gate key holders, hand towels and postcards, to sweets, sake, and telephone cards (Plate 3.3). Two famous products made by local wood craftsmen are hand-made miniature *Ōtorii* and wooden decorative trays with carvings of the Grand Gate in front of the shrine (Plate 3.4).

Today, locals continue to draw on Miyajima's extra-ordinary natural surroundings to attract visitors. The discourse about the existence of a Pristine Forest is one example of this (see Chapter 2). Autumn is the busiest period on the island because large crowds come to view the beautiful colours of the maple trees covering the mountains. In recent years, Miyajima has seen a growth of nature tourists, a fast growing industry all over Japan. The main reason for this trend is the growing ecological awareness among Japanese during the 1990s.⁸ However, Mr. Kanaizuka, a local researcher who has been studying Miyajima's wild life for several decades, is rather cynical about the recent ecological boom in Japan. Recently, he proposed to start an educational course about Miyajima's rich nature, but his plans were met locally with disapproval. In his words:

Hiroden [the local railway company that operates the cable car and also employs Mr. Kanaizuka] was not interested in that; they only think about money. It is possible to follow the trail of the monkeys, but we would need trained staff as guides. The Town Hall was not interested in this plan either because they predict that the 'eco-tourism boom' will soon decline.

This incident shows the powerful position of transportation companies in generating tourism. Not only do they decide which parts of the country are more easily accessible, they also have a major stake in local tourist-related developments.

⁷ At the end of the eighteenth century, landscape woodblock prints became established as a separate genre. Hiroshige's 'The fifty-three Stations of the Tōkaidō' series sold more than ten thousand copies during the artist's lifetime (Kōhō Miyajima, 1998: 10).

⁸ In Chapter 5, I will return to the growing concern with nature translated in the sale of ecological goods in the souvenir shops on Miyajima.



Plate 3.2: Tourists have their picture taken in front of the Grand Gate.



Plate 3.3: The Grand Gate printed on the wrapping paper of Miyajima Eclairs.



Plate 3.4: Wooden plates engraved with the Grand Gate by Mr. Hirokawa.

A second way the locals attempt to increase the fame of the island is by linking Miyajima with famous visitors. These are, firstly, historical figures whose life histories are officially recorded in Japanese history and schoolbooks and, as we shall see, more recently, also in historical dramas on television. The second type of visitors consists of celebrities whose fame is based on their frequent appearances in nation-wide media.

3. Famous Historical Figures and Media Celebrities

Fame is often constructed in retrospect. In every age, new layers of meaning are added. Today, Miyajima prides itself on a long list of famous visitors who have been instrumental in Japanese history in general. Similarly, Braudy has pointed out how in a western context figures from the past are continuously rediscovered for present interests (Braudy, 1986: 207). The historical connections between Miyajima and Japanese history in general are officially established in history and school books. What particularly interests me here is the way local discourses link visits of these famous historical figures with material culture on the island. I have selected two famous historical personae in order to demonstrate the working of these processes of objectification on the island. Firstly, priest Kukai (better known as Kōbō Daishi) the founder of the Shingon Buddhist Sect in Japan in the ninth century; secondly, Taira no Kiyomori, a military lord from the Heike clan, who supported the construction of Itsukushima Shrine in the twelfth century.

1. Kōbō Daishi (774-835)

As we have seen in Chapter 1, Kōbō Daishi, the founder of the Shingon Sect, is said to have visited Miyajima in 806 on his way back from China where he studied Buddhism for two years. He is supposed to have conducted an ascetic service of one thousand days (*gūmonji*) in the Misen Mountains. During this religious practice, for example, he produced the statue of the Buddhist deity Benzaiten also under discussion in Chapter 1. These days, visitors to Miyajima, at least those who care to take the cable car up the Misen Mountains, can walk in the footsteps of this famous monk. During the *Misen Historical Tour*, several sites linked with Kōbō Daishi can be viewed: for example, a twig of a plum tree left there by the Master which blooms only in times of prosperity and a great Mandara rock with Buddhist scriptures written by him. The main attraction, however, is the Hall with the eternal flame (*Reikadō*) that Kōbō Daishi is said to have lit for his ascetic ceremony and that, supposedly, has been kept burning for over 1,160 years. Above this fire hangs a huge pot and the water, said to have magical powers, is sold at the site as a medicine for good health.

2. Taira no Kiyomori (1118-81)

Taira no Kiyomori, the central figure in the famous war chronicle *Heike Monogatari*, was a powerful provincial governor of warrior origin who rose to power and came to dominate the court for many years. Kiyomori is also a key figure in Miyajima's history. He was a devotee of the beliefs surrounding Miyajima's reputation as a sacred island, funded the construction of the Itsukushima Shrine and filled it with treasures. Today, the treasures donated by the Heike clan as prayers for their prosperity, for example masks and fans, are kept in the treasury of the Shrine.⁹ A special exhibition of the Heike Lotus Sutra Scrolls (*Heike Nōkyō*), an important national treasure, held during April and May 1997, generated a lot of interest. Furthermore, a Kiyomori Shrine was built to commemorate the achievements of the warlord. Until 1996, on the twentieth of March each year, a Kiyomori Festival with a parade depicting Kiyomori's life history was held. Recently, *the Pilgrimage to the Historic Scenes of the Heike Clan Course* was added to the set of sightseeing courses offered on Miyajima. The tour includes the Itsukushima Shrine, The Kiyomori Shrine, Kyōzuka Mound and the Treasure Hall.

Both examples above illustrate how the local community enhances Miyajima's credibility as a famous place through associating material culture on the island with individuals who feature in Japanese national history. Narratives explain certain material forms in the landscape as traces left behind by famous visitors during their stay. These processes of objectification on Miyajima bring to mind the much-discussed myths of Australian aborigines that link the creation of the landscape with the actions of ancestral beings. The general story line is that ancestors, who are constantly travelling through the landscape, leave behind a number of permanent signs of their transformations (Munn, 1971). I am aware that comparing Australian dream stories with tourist-oriented stories on Miyajima is problematic. In the Australian case, the myths about the journeys of ancestors form a complex framework for ordering relations between people, ancestors and land. On Miyajima, stories of historical visitors mainly aim to promote tourism. Nevertheless, both case studies reveal similar processes whereby objects are used as vehicles to bring the past into the present. Thus, on Miyajima, famous travelling figures from the past are reified, giving qualities to objects, to attract tourism in the present. The creativity of these famous visitors is said to underlie the creation of the man-made landscape. In case study 1, for example, material forms

⁹Okazaki has demonstrated how during the twelfth century various people in the capital Kyoto donated offerings to the Itsukushima Shrine. In return they received objects (*kazukemono*) from the Shrine (Okazaki, 1991:4).

such as the water kettle and the Hall built around it, the rock with Buddhist scriptures and Benzaiten's statue, are signs referring to the famous ascetic monk Kōbō Daishi. The second case study shows that the Itsukushima Shrine, and the treasures inside are traces of Taira Kiyomori's visit to the island.

The historical figures discussed above play an important role in Japan's national history. Here, something more can be said about the way people in the local community on Miyajima identify themselves both in terms of and against the Japanese State. The American anthropologist William Kelly (1990) has demonstrated that although the lives of rural and urban Japanese are becoming increasingly similar, the countryside continues to be looked on as a more traditional authentic place. He reveals an ambivalence in Japanese society whereby rural communities are simultaneously incorporated and differentiated from the larger society (Kelly, 1990). Since the end of the nineteenth century, after the formation of the modern Japanese nation-state, national and later also international authorities played an important role in the creation of Miyajima as a recognised place for travelling. The national government focused on the fame of the Itsukushima Shrine and took measures to incorporate it into the national heritage. In 1871, the Itsukushima Shrine became a *National Shrine* in 1929, it became a *National Treasure* and in 1996, the Shrine and the Misen Mountains behind it became a UNESCO World Heritage site.

The view that famous people are instrumental in increasing the fame of a place seems to contradict the depiction of Miyajima as a sacred place famous for its sublime nature that is often associated with a uniquely Japanese sensitivity towards natural phenomena based on Shinto beliefs. My research suggests that in Japan the coexistence of notions of power in the empty landscape and personalised power has historical roots. The various processes of religious representation in Japan set out in Chapter 1 illustrate this. The Miyajima case study shows how Buddhist ideas about the personalised power of deities amalgamated with Shinto beliefs concerning power in the landscape and in natural phenomena. The awe-inspiring view of the Miyajima mountains from afar led to the establishment of Miyajima as a sacred Shinto space. Since the ninth century, the Miyajima landscape is said to have echoed the divine power of the female Deity, Benzaiten. The personalised power of the Goddess Benzaiten is considered to materialise in the landscape, a statue, the shrine and Miyajima shamoji. This suggests continuity between traditional processes of embodiment of the deity and the more modern forms of embodiment of power of famous historical people and media celebrities on Miyajima.

Modern media, especially TV, are another key element in local strategies to 'give official approval' to Miyajima as a famous tourist site. Shirahata calls the competition between contemporary tourist sites an 'information battle'. He argues that large scale media events and TV programmes with high viewing rates are forceful means of communicating information to stimulate tourism (Shirahata, 1995: 62). Kelly has argued that an increased interest in history, branded *rekishi boom*, has since the 1960s resulted in 'a media celebration of the Japanese past with a particular emphasis on individual heroic action' (Kelly, 1990: 69). The start of the extremely popular Epic Historical Drama series about historical figures broadcasted by the NHK station should be seen in this light.

In 1997, the programme focussed on the feudal lord Mori Motonari (1497-1571), closely linked with Miyajima and the Itsukushima Shrine because he won the battle of Itsukushima (1555). Mori Motonari is an example of how a historical figure, turned into a media celebrity, is used to increase tourism to a certain place. The drama was shown weekly during prime time on NHK. Each episode started with a view of the Grand Gate and the Itsukushima Shrine. The success of this TV drama resulted in a flow of 'Mori-fans' to the island. The islanders responded to the increasing interest in Mori Motonari by placing sign posts related to Mori's whereabouts on the island. Another successful strategy was the production and distribution of goods linked with Mori, a theme that will be discussed in the next section.

4. The Authentic Shamoji-Island

A concept related to famous places is *meibutsu*, literally, 'things (*butsu*) for which the area is famous (*mei*).'⁹ Originally, these were local food products, often pounded rice cakes, that were fresh and had to be eaten fast at the locality. Famous durable souvenirs were mainly crafts that were small, light and not too fragile to be transported on foot (Kanzaki, 1997: 148).¹⁰ We have seen that coloured toothpicks were sold as special products from Miyajima during the eighteenth century. In sources dating back to 1818, shell-crafts and Miyajima pottery are mentioned as Miyajima products, while references to wooden rice scoops appear from 1830 (Okazaki, 1991:6). During the nineteenth century, shamoji became known as 'the' famous product from Miyajima. Today, the uniqueness of Miyajima is still in part produced through association with the manufacture, distribution and consumption of shamoji. Miyajima shamoji are for sale in a variety

of sizes, materials and applications in religious institutions and numerous souvenir shops on the island (see Chapter 4 and 5).

Local and national forces engaged in the production of a natural, cultural and religious heritage on Miyajima strongly highlight the association between shamoji and the island. The origin myth of the shamoji, which I have discussed in detail in Chapter 1, for example, authenticates the semiotic relationship between shamoji and the sacred island. Authenticity is a commodity marketed and consumed and, as Tobin has pointed out, in Japan artefacts, traditions and the past may be labelled as 'authentic'. Towns compete to become, for example, Japan's most authentic pottery, whaling or paper-making village. Politics are played out nationally and internationally in the mass media, in advertising campaigns for the Railways or in the activities of the Agency for Cultural Affairs (Tobin, 1992: 29). Miyajima is marketed as the authentic shamoji-island, where seventy percent of the shamoji in Japan are produced and where, since April 1997, the biggest shamoji in the world is on display. In 1982, the Miyajima shamoji was officially recognised as a 'Traditional Craft'.

I agree with Graburn that, because Japanese tourists prefer to visit generally approved places, every destination has to 'invent its own approval' by getting itself literally and 'figuratively' on the map' (Graburn, 1995: 57-8). Another example of this construction of authentic Japanese towns around the production of a certain craft is Marugame, a Castle Town on Shikoku, one of the four main Japanese islands, which promotes itself as 'Japan's number one producer of fans'. Mount Konpira located close to Marugame, is a popular religious centre and, like the Miyajima shamoji, fans were first made at the end of the eighteenth century as souvenirs for pilgrims. Today, it is locally claimed that ninety percent of all fans in Japan are made in Marugame. This association between objects and their place of production is a common technique to promote the reputation of a certain region throughout Japan. Today this distinction of places according to objects produced is also a promotional tool of the Arts and Crafts association. Some regions or towns create a certain uniqueness through association with local food products. The Kagoshima region in southern Japan, for example, is linked with tangerines.

Shamoji are constructed as approved famous products from Miyajima. The following sketch of a likely scenario for a day of leisure spent on Miyajima illustrates the multitude of ways shamoji are

¹⁰ As Graburn explained, the term *meibutsu* does not only refers to local products but also to 'natural and cultural fixtures of the landscape' (Graburn, 1995: 58).

employed on the island. Miyajima can be reached by ferry either from Hiroshima port in twenty three minutes or from Miyajimaguchi, across the bay, in ten minutes. The ferry ride is one of the highlights of the visit to Miyajima. The boat's approach to the island permits passengers a splendid view of its unique features: the deep green of the gently sloping mountains covered with dense forest forms a perfect backdrop for the sixteen metres high vermilion coloured Grand Gateway standing in the sea two hundred metres in front of the Itsukushima Shrine. During fieldwork conducted in July and October 1994, tourists were able to purchase a shamoji transportation ticket for only 840 yen (4.2 pounds) that allowed them to use all transportation in Hiroshima city as well as the ferry to Miyajima for an entire day.¹¹

In the gloomy entrance hall of the ferry terminal, one is welcomed by huge colourful posters placed high up on the walls in light boxes with advertisements underneath. The pictures depict Miyajima's main tourist spots, major events and souvenirs. Placed above the exit is a poster showing a multiplicity of shamoji and other woodcrafts, special products from Miyajima. Underneath this poster, Miyachu, the company with a monopoly on the production and distribution of Miyajima shamoji, has put the slogan, 'We take pride in our tradition and reputation'. Nearby, a two-meter long shamoji attached to a pillar of a kiosk promotes shamoji senbei, rice crackers in the form of rice scoops.

Most tourists arriving at the pier prefer to turn directly right onto the road which leads them to the Itsukushima Shrine. As one approaches along a stretch of beach, one can catch a first glimpse of the red Grand Gate floating in the bay. It is impossible not to reach for the camera to take that perfect picture: standing between a stone lantern and a pine tree, a few deer around, and the Grand Gate in the sea in the background (Plate 3.2). Alternatively, one may choose to have the visit immortalised by a professional photographer who has put a stall up there. This formal commemorative picture is included in the group tour package and several times a day, groups neatly line up with a sign carrying the date and place put in front of them.

Finally, then, the highlight of the visit: the Itsukushima Shrine. In front of the main sanctuary most pause briefly, throw a coin in the collection box and pay reverence to the deity enshrined. Some may leave a votive offering behind; others acquire a protective talisman or a good luck paper.

¹¹ The shamoji ticket campaign was jointly organised by the Hiroshima Dentetsu Railway Company and the Matsudai Ferry Company to commemorate the completion of a new Miyajima station on the Dentetsu line in July 1993.

From a platform in front of the main hall visitors are offered another dazzling view of the Gate and again a queue to take pictures forms. Through another corridor one continues towards the Daiganji Temple where the deity Benzaiten is worshipped (see Chapter 1). Her altar is surrounded by several big shamoji, with inscriptions like 'prosperity in business' and 'safety in the house'. On both sides of the altar tourists are given the opportunity to offer 300 yen (1.50 pounds) and send a personal wish with a shamoji to Benzaiten. They write their vow, name, and age on a small shamoji, which is placed on top of a pile of other votive scoops. At the temple's office, one can buy shamoji talismans in a variety of sizes, blessed by the priests of the temple with powers that, for example, offer assistance to pass an exam or ensure the safe delivery of a baby.

Around the corner the Miyajima Municipal History and Folklore Museum presents the history of the everyday life with displays of the traditional manufacturing of shamoji. Special attention is given to famous people associated with Miyajima's history such as the Monk Seishin celebrated as the inventor of the Miyajima shamoji. Around noon, visitors fill the shopping street leading to the Itsukushima Shrine.¹² Both sides of the road are lined with souvenir shops and restaurants. Some have huge shamoji shop-signboards hanging above the entrance. The menus in some establishments are written on shamoji hung outside the shop or small shamoji indicating the price may be placed next to plastic replicas of the dishes offered (Plate 3.5). A shamoji-shaped advertisement promotes Hiroshima Jaken, a beer brewed in Hiroshima. In some restaurants, scallop shells, oysters or eel are served on shamoji shaped trays while the chopsticks rest on shamoji chopsticks holders. In one corner of a restaurant, there is a small alcove with several shamoji signed by famous actors, Sumo wrestlers, and sportsmen who have visited the island. After dinner the visitors can have their picture taken in front of the biggest shamoji in the world.

Now, one may feel tempted to continue through the tranquil Momijidani (Maple Tree Valley) Park, which draws crowds of maple leaf viewers in autumn, to the cable car station. People who stay the night in one of the hotels on the island may receive a coupon which they can exchange for a commemorative shamoji with a picture of the Grand Gate, some pine trees and a cable car. During the thirty minute ride through the Misen Primeval Forest, one can enjoy breath-taking panoramas over the Japanese Inland Sea. At the summit visitors can rest over a cup of tea with shamoji-shaped rice crackers.

¹²See Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion of this shopping street

After descending, some tourists may climb the stairs to the Senjōkaku. The ceiling of this Sutra Hall is covered with the votive offerings of previous generations. These offerings include giant shamoji with prayers for victory in war dating back as early as the nineteenth century. Then begins the final hunt for souvenirs. There are at least a dozen souvenir shops where the whole range of Miyajima souvenirs is available. Most Japanese visitors would not go home without some Momiji Manjū, buns shaped like a maple leaf. Shoppers may also opt for a myriad of shamoji-shapes such as shamoji for daily use, prayer-shamoji, shamoji key holders or shamoji-shaped bread-boards and bowls (Plate 3.6).

The trip sketched out above enables visitors to see the main attractions on the island. Tourist experiences on the island are saturated with shamoji-shapes. The excess of shamoji-shapes is part of a local strategy to authenticate Miyajima as the shamoji island and to construct shamoji as the approved product to take home. We will see in Chapter 6 that any shamoji-shape is attributed with agency and can scoop luck. In this case, luck means attracting tourists and luring them into consuming on the island and taking home a shamoji-shape.

The next section will focus on the experience of multi-motivated tourists to Miyajima. A discussion of several case studies will reveal the diversity of experiences tourists have.¹³ It will also challenge the major frameworks of tourism and the Japan-related theories based on them, as set out in the introduction. Not every tourist is a pilgrim or a nostalgic traveller. Gender, age and class are important parameters distinguishing the behaviour of Japanese tourists (Linhart, 1998: 7). As Clammer has pointed out, 'tourism has become one of the most conspicuous forms of consumption in Japan.' It is 'linked to the huge availability of travel information and integrated into the gift economy, associated with status and perceived as a necessary adjunct to or expression of middle class life' (Clammer, 1997: 148). The tourist consumer is not a passive victim, there is always room 'for bypassing and deviations from the tourist script' (Rojek, 1993: 177). Craik has suggested that those producing and marketing cultural tourism

too often hope to attract the 'ideal' cultural tourist who is highly motivated to consume culture and possesses a high level of cultural capital; yet most cultural tourism consumers are adjunct, accidental or reluctant visitors (Craik, 1997: 120).

¹³ The case studies are based on fieldwork conducted on Miyajima during spring 1999.



Plate 3.5: Shamoji-shaped price tags in front of plastic food displays, in the window of a restaurant in the shopping arcade on Miyajima.



Plate 3.6: Shamoji made of a variety of materials are on sale in souvenir shops on the island.

5. Consuming Tourist Places: case studies

In 1999, domestic travel was the third favourite leisure activity of the Japanese; only dining out and driving scored better. More than fifty-six million Japanese travelled within their country (ASJA, 2001: 269-71). However, the strong yen has made air travel cheaper and brought foreign destinations within the reach of many Japanese. More than sixteen million Japanese travelled abroad in 1999, eighty-two percent for sightseeing, and this market continues to grow (ASJA, 2001: 272). Unmarried adults, especially young women in temporary careers and retired people are the two major groups of Japanese tourists. The latter group mainly travels within Japan (Clammer, 1997: 144). However, a survey conducted in 1996 shows that 27.9 per cent of the elderly also hold a passport (McCreery, 2000: 200).

Miyajima is easily accessible and more than three million tourists visit the island annually. The busiest period on Miyajima is November followed by October and January. During the New Year period, the Itsukushima Shrine, like many other major shrines in Japan, is buzzing with people. The seasonal viewing of nature is another important event for the Miyajima tourist industry. The cherry blossoms bloom in April, and from October until November the marvellous colours of the maple leaves attract crowds (Miyajimachō shōkōkai, 1997). This corresponds with the seasonal leisure pattern of the Japanese, as defined by Linhart (1998) in the introduction to a recent edited volume about leisure in Japan. He distinguishes between the New Year period with at least three free days, Golden week at the end of April and beginning of May, the Bon festival in the middle of August, and fourteen national holidays during the year (Linhart, 1998). The Japanese holiday pattern is constrained by time, but the series of public holidays enables people to make a series of short trips throughout the year.

Tourists visiting Miyajima can be divided into two major groups: those travelling in big organised groups and those who prefer a more individual way of travelling. Already, in 1983, Moeran introduces us to a new generation of young Japanese who prefer to travel abroad alone or in small groups. He claims that

tourism is no longer rigidly controlled; the Japanese are being invited to do what they want, as they want, and where they want, and sometimes are required only to reserve their plane seats and the hotel accommodation in advance. The era of the flag-bearing uniformed guide leading a party of bewildered Japanese tourists across Trafalgar Square or up the Empire State Building appears to be coming to a close (Moeran, 1983: 95).

Similarly, today the trend in Japanese domestic travel is smaller groups, but guided package tours have not disappeared. In 1997, for example, more than thirty percent of tourists to Miyajima travelled in supervised groups (Miyajimachō shōkōkai, 1997). It would be more correct to see this way of travelling as one of the options among a variety of travel choices consumers can make. Convenience, safety and expense are cited as the main reasons for travelling in organised groups. Tours are most popular with the elderly and schoolchildren because 'there is a feeling of security. Not having to worry about arrangements is more comfortable than travelling alone' (McCreery, 2000: 198). This brings us to the significant social aspect of travelling in a group, which gives people the opportunity to chat and gossip while moving around. I will return to this point later.

Japanese tourists who opt for highly organised travel in groups resemble tourists on package tours all around the world. These travellers in Bruner's words

voluntarily surrender control, they let go, and turn over the management of the tour to the agency. They become passive and dependent, and this is what gives them the feeling of relaxation (Bruner, 1995: 237).

Mr. and Mrs. Miyazato, upper-middle class pensioners in their sixties, for example, make three or four short trips a year. They prefer package tours. In April 1999 they travelled to Hokuriku, the northern most tip of mainland Japan. The two nights, three days trip was organised by a travel agency in Hiroshima. In May, they went on a one week package tour to the American West coast with the same travel agency. Mister Miyazato's brother and sister with their spouses subscribed too. When I inquired about why the six of them didn't consider travelling together, I was told that:

When you are getting older many things become scary. For Japanese particularly, going abroad is difficult because they can't understand the language. Even in Japan travelling alone is too risky.

Another important consideration is that these organised tours are relatively cheap. Kaori, the Miyazato's youngest daughter in her mid-thirties refuses to join her parents on their journeys. She claims that she is willing to pay double to visit the same place if it is at her own pace. She criticises their way of travelling as follows:

These kind of trips are like supermarket sales. Yet, I think it is still a waste of money. It is true that they are extremely cheap. For example, a trip to Tokyo Disney Land or to a Hot Spring, accommodation and transportation included, may cost only 30.000 yen (150 pounds). That is indeed unbelievably cheap if one considers that one does not have to take care of anything. But then, it only means you have been there. You just go there and say, aa, this is beautiful.

This resembles the critique expressed, for example, by Europeans who observe Japanese package tours to their cities. Rojek has analysed hostility towards contemporary mass tourism in the west where these tourists are frequently

presented as lacking initiative and discrimination. They are unadventurous, unimaginative and insipid. For them, travel experience is akin to grazing - they mechanically consume whatever the tour operator feeds them (Rojek, 1993:175).

Rojek traces this antagonism back to the nineteenth century bourgeoisie travellers who loathed the loss of exclusivity due to the democratisation of travel. Similarly, today's exclusive traveller in search of self-improvement continues to picture himself against the passive mass tourist.

On Miyajima, pensioners and school children are the main consumers of organised group travel. Case study 1 discusses a conventional group of pensioners headed by a guide carrying a flag and a microphone around the island and case study 2 looks at a group of school children and their teachers.

Case study 1: Been there, seen it, done it, check.

The Hayashi's, both in their sixties, from Yokohama, were members of a two day package-tour in the Hiroshima and Yamaguchi area for pensioners of the Yokohama branch of National, an electrical appliances company. The day before they had arrived by bullet train in Hiroshima and had visited the Atomic Bomb Peace Park and spent the night in a hotel there. The groups arrived at the ferry terminal on Miyajima at around 14.00hr., where a local guide welcomed them waving a flag. Along the fastest route, the group was led straight to the Itsukushima Shrine. In front of the Grand Gate, a brief stop was made to take a commemorative group picture, with everybody donning the same National blue sun cap. The party walked through the Shrine while information echoed through the guide's microphone. Then they headed for the Daiganji Temple, where there was a spare moment to light some incense or think a transcendental thought. Then, the group was guided into the shopping arcade straight to the Daikonya souvenir shop.¹⁴ The Hayashis bought a shamoji made of mulberry wood as a memento (*kinen*) of their trip. They told me they had already purchased a few boxes of momiji Manjû sweet bean buns for friends and neighbours the day before in Hiroshima. Less than two hours after their arrival, the party, all carrying plastic

¹⁴In Chapter 5 I will pay special attention to this practice of guiding tourists to a certain shop

bags from the Daikonya souvenir shop, arrived back at the pier. When I asked them about their impressions of Miyajima, Mrs. Hayashi answered:

As I thought, wow, the Grand Gate and the Shrine [are amazing].

Miyajima is a popular destination for school excursions (*shūgaku ryokō*) and case study 2 deals with this category of visitor. School excursions to historically and culturally significant sights are for most Japanese children their first experience of tourism.¹⁵ These trips also function as a kind of socialisation into the practice of gift giving (Graburn, 1983: 37, Nitta, 1992: 210).¹⁶

Case study 2: This year's spring holiday school excursion to Miyajima

Kaori and Keiko, both fourteen, travelled to Miyajima on a school excursion. Early in the morning they, together with approximately one hundred fifty second graders and their teachers from Koriyama Junior High in Nara Prefecture, took a local train to Osaka where they boarded the bullet train to Hiroshima. The group arrived on Miyajima around 1pm and began, headed by two teachers, a walking tour along all the major attractions on the island. Along the way, some of the teenagers got bored and fooled around, feeding and teasing the deer. Around 4 pm. the students were allowed to explore the shopping arcade on their own. A group of boys headed directly for the game centre. Kaori and Keiko went souvenir-hunting. Kaori bought herself a miniature wooden shamoji key holder with an image of the Grand Gate and a wish for passing exams printed on it. Naoko purchased a shamoji with the name of her favourite TV celebrity printed on it (Chapter 5). Then, both girls joined the crowds in front of the Photo Club machines¹⁷ to compose a memento of their trip for 300 yen. At 6 p.m., the group went to their hotel on Miyajima. The next morning, Hiroshima will be explored.

A fast-growing alternative type of group travel to Miyajima are groups of hikers who explore Miyajima's natural beauty. Mr. Kondo, a seventy two year old retired businessman, for example, visited Miyajima as an active member of an amateur mountaineer club from Okayama. These kinds of visitors are not particularly interested in the famous historical sites on the Island. The

¹⁵ Sites closely association with Japan's history such as Nara, Kyoto and Kamakura are traditional school trip destinations, but recently some schools have also begun to travel abroad. This is one of the reasons why school trips to Miyajima are in decline.

¹⁶ In 1997 only 33% of visitors, belonging mainly to the latter group, stayed at least one night on Miyajima although more than 78% combined a trip to Miyajima with a overnight stay in the area (Miyajimachō shōkōkai, 1997).

¹⁷ Photo club refers to a series of miniature instant photographs that can be used as stickers.

purpose of their trip is often well-defined, for example, climbing to the top of Mount Misen, viewing the maple leaves or watching rare birds.

According to statistics from 1997 seventy percent of visitors to Miyajima are individual tourists travelling in small groups on short day trips (Miyajimachō shōkōkai, 1997). A large number of these visitors are middle-aged housewives. Their whereabouts will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4 and 5.¹⁸ In the two remaining case studies I will consider young families on informal trips. Case study 3 follows a family on a day trip while case study 4 depicts the visit of a woman in her mid-twenties with two small children.

Case study 3: Little time for family leisure

The family Fujimoto from Chiba Prefecture made a day trip by plane to Hiroshima and Miyajima. Mr. Fujimoto, a high school teacher, and Mrs. Fujimoto, a full-time housewife, both in their forties, their twelve year old daughter Emiko and ten year old son Ken, landed at Hiroshima airport around 0900 hr. and visited Hiroshima Castle and the Peace Park. Around 13.30 hr. they had a quick lunch on Miyajima and then went straight to the Itsukushima Shrine. They walked through the Shrine and briefly visited the Treasure Hall where several national treasures associated with the Heike clan are on display. The children bought a snack from a stall and then the family turned into the shopping arcade. Mrs Fujimoto and her daughter bought two small *prayer-shamoji* with inscriptions: health (*kenkō*) and passing exams (*gōkaku*). They told me they planned to put both in their decorative alcove at home to ensure good health for the whole family and to help the children in passing their exams.

In the meantime, Mr. Fujimoto purchased two boxes of the maple-leaf-shaped buns filled with chocolate for his colleagues. After spending approximately two and a half hours on Miyajima they were hurrying back to Hiroshima to catch their plane home.

Case study 4: A day of deer chasing

Mrs. Kojima, a housewife in her thirties from Yamaguchi Prefecture visited Miyajima with her two young children Maki and Noriko aged four and six. Mrs. Kojima told me that it was just a sudden impulse to visit because she also came Miyajima as a child. They arrived around eleven in the morning and strolled towards the Shrine. The children became extremely agitated at the sight of

¹⁸ Since the 1980s middle-aged housewives whose children are at school with free time on their hands have been targeted by the tourists industry. (Linhart, 1998: 9).

deer. Mrs Kojima bought some pet food and soon the family was followed around by a devoted herd. When they finally made it to the shrine Mrs.Kojima took a few picture of her youngsters in front of the Grand Gate and of course some deer. Then, they visited the aquarium where the children posted themselves before the panda-dolphins tank. After half an hour, their mother had to fall back to the prospect of all the deer waiting for them outside in order to persuade them to move on. Mrs. Kojima bought some pickles to enjoy with her husband back home and the children each cherished their blue plastic deer on wheels. At 14.30 hr. the family left Miyajima. Mrs. Kojima summarised the trip:

Well, my strongest impression of the island, hmmm, probably it will be the deer. It feels as though deer were on the tip of our tongues all day long.

The case studies above broadly represent the variety of experiences tourists may have on Miyajima. Age has been established as a major determinant when people decide to travel alone or in a group. The main consumers of organised group travel are pensioners (case study 1) and school-going children (case study 2). However, across the whole range of age groups, members of formal organisations, as well as informal clubs or sports teams, prefer travelling in guided groups. Expense, convenience and safety are considerations high on the list of this group of consumers. Often a night's stay in the area is included in the package. Young families (case study 3 and 4) and small groups of peers on short day trips form the other, fast-growing, segment of tourist-consumers on Miyajima. These visitors travel swiftly through the island without a guide while sharing a range of experiences.

One group of visitors on Miyajima that I have not touched upon in my discussion above, but which can not be overlooked, are those who travel as pilgrims. Throughout my stay on the island, I have encountered two different groups of pilgrims. First, those who visit Miyajima as part of a larger pilgrimage circuit and who are easy recognisable by their trademark white clothing, straw hats, bells and sticks (Plate 3.7). Many of these visitors were elderly people on pilgrimage-package tours travelling around in coaches and often staying in luxury hotels. Far less visible are the second group of pilgrims that travel alone or in small groups. On the 1st and the 15th of each month, the bonding days (*ennichi*) (see Chapter 1) of the famous monk Kōbō Daishi, for example, a large number of this type of pilgrim descends on Miyajima, where they complete a personal circuit of temples and shrines while performing a range of activities (Plate 3.8). Although these types of pilgrims are mainly middle-aged and elderly women living within the larger Hiroshima region, I have seen people of all ages paying a special visit on these days.

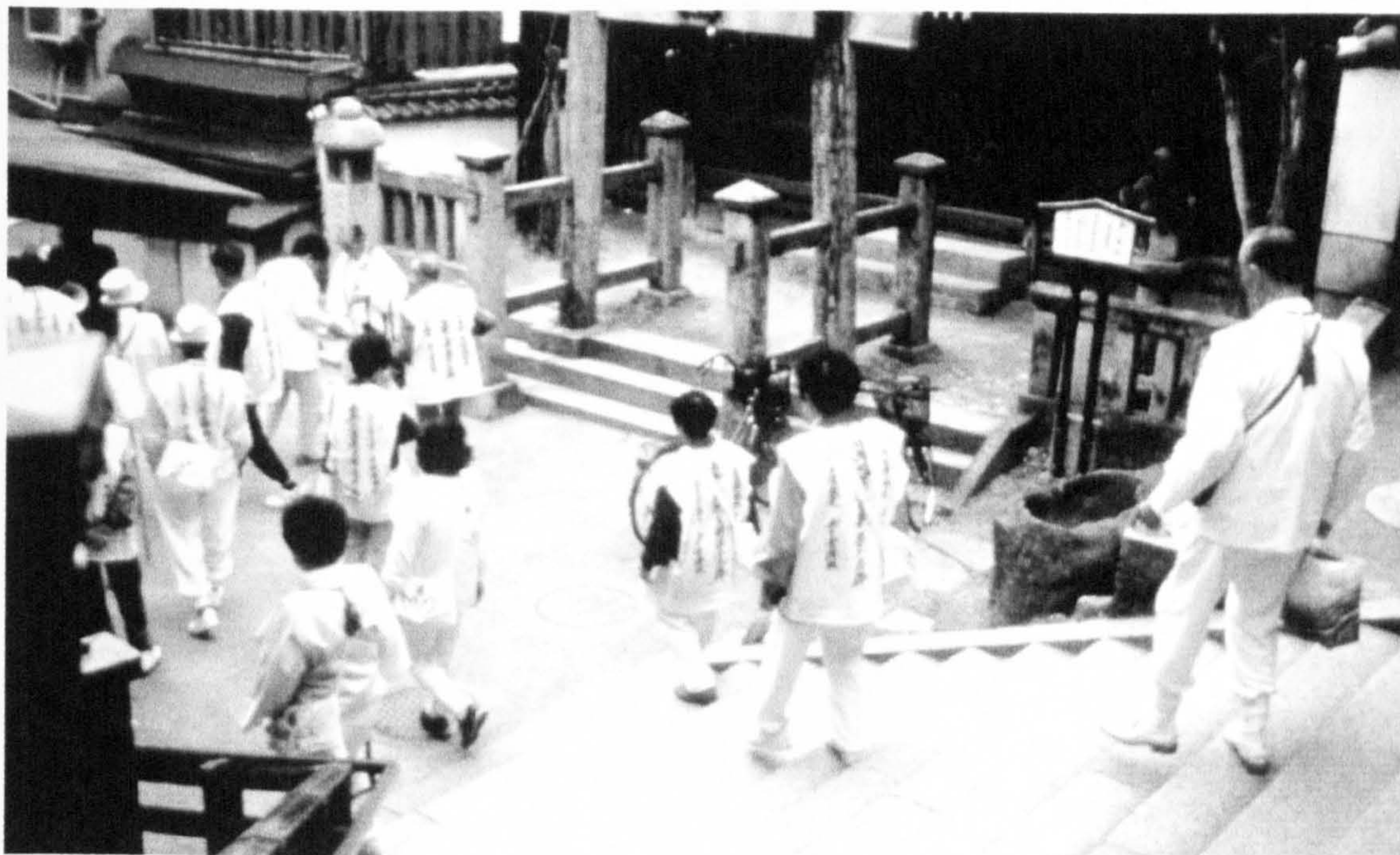


Plate 3.7: Pilgrims on a formal pilgrimage tour.



Plate 3.8: Pilgrims visiting the Daishoin Temple during the monthly bond day of Kobo Daishi.

Mrs. Yamaguchi, a housewife in her late fifties and her daughter-in-law Atsuko, thirty-three years old, from Hiroshima City belong to the latter group of pilgrims. I met them one morning at 10.00 hr. while they were waiting at the ferry terminal to return home. Both women were carrying bags with the logo of the Daishoin Temple. They had arrived early in the morning to pray at this temple in order to avert bad luck from the younger woman who was thirty-three years old and as such in her unlucky year. They had employed the special services of a priest who chanted sacred texts to ask the deities for assistance. They had purchased a talisman for Atsuko, some charms to protect their home, and a charm for safe travel to hang in Mr. Yamaguchi's taxi.

These examples suggest that there is no clear-cut distinction between those who visit Miyajima for leisure and those who are mainly motivated by religious pursuits. The latter group of visitors may be primarily driven by formal religious beliefs, but they can, simultaneously, engage in more frivolous activities.¹⁹ I frequently witnessed pilgrims in typical white outfits enjoying tea and local specialities or shopping for souvenirs in the shopping arcade. I agree with Pfaffenberger (1983) that the distinction commonly made between pilgrimage and tourism should not be seen as a phenomenological one. Instead, this division is grounded in normative connotations linked with both terms in the English language. Tourism is associated with 'superficial and frivolous phenomenon', while pilgrimage is considered to be 'genuine, authentic, serious, legitimate' (Pfaffenberger, 1983: 61). Pfaffenberger clearly demonstrates that in contemporary Sri Lanka, for example, frivolity and superficiality are considered part and parcel of the indigenous language of pilgrimage (ibid. 72). As we have seen, prayer and play are both important components of the Japanese pilgrimage. The word *asobi* used today for play originally referred to religious practices as well as merry-making activities.

I will conclude this chapter by exploring some broader themes that arise from my case studies. This should enable me to reach more general conclusions about the nature of domestic tourism in Japan.

6. Discussion: Mobility, Sociability and Japanese Domestic Travel

Throughout my fieldwork on Miyajima, I was impressed by the speed of the daily flow of people coming and going. Statistics show that visitors on average spend two and a half hours on the island (Miyajimachō shōkōkai, 1997: 12-13). My data suggest that, for the majority of people,

whatever their travel arrangements, the Miyajima experience boils down to seeing the Itsukushima Shrine and the Grand Gate, taking the appropriate pictures, buying souvenirs and rushing back to the ferry. Speed is a key characteristic of Japanese domestic travel, but why do Japanese tourists travel at such a fast pace? Tight schedules and few holidays may be one possible explanation. Family holidays lasting several weeks are rare in Japan. Moreover, school holidays are rather short and often used for private study (Linhart, 1998: 13-14). However, in order to formulate a more adequate answer to the question of speed, we will first need to address the more general issue of how the Japanese view the relationship between work and free time.

There seems to exist a discrepancy between the discourse and practices related to work time in Japan. Post-war official working-time statistics invariably show that the average time spent working is much higher in Japan than in other industrialised countries. As a consequence, the shortening of the working-week has been a key issue in the political debate about trade imbalances and in the official discourse about the internationalisation of Japanese society put forward by the government and repeated in the media since the 1980s (Linhart, 1998: 2-3). By 1996, a large number of Japanese firms had agreed to adopt the forty-hour week, but in reality most people still make comparatively little use of their vacations. The average is eight or nine days of vacation per employee in large corporations in a year (Linhart, 1998:14).²⁰ The main reasons given for this are strong pressure from the management and colleagues to remain at work (Richards, 1998: 150). Allison has rightly pointed at the dangers of adopting an essentialist view when discussing Japanese forms of play and work. All too often researchers, Japanese and others, have described the strong resemblance between forms of work and relaxation in Japan as a typical cultural trait. As such, Japanese culture is supposed to encourage hard work and repel relaxation, which explains why Japanese only relax for a few days (Allison, 1994: 119-3).

A practice often mentioned in this respect is the fact that large number of Japanese employees socialise with colleagues after work on a daily base. But unlike British pub culture, for example, in Japan big corporations such as trading or securities companies set aside a large sum of so-called recreation money (*kōsaishi*) to pay for their employees' entertainment after work (Allison, 1994: 126-7). Through regular night time entertainment, for example in hostess clubs, employees are

¹⁹ See also Coleman and Elsner's (1998) analysis of the playful aspects of a pilgrimage in the UK.

²⁰ However, women are more likely to take their vacation than men. Their limited career possibilities and the tendency to stay at home after becoming a mother have been cited as the main reasons (Linhart, 1998).

rewarded for their diligence. These are also male-bonding activities through which employers aim to create a strong link between the company and their workers (ibid.:198).

The Japanese sociologist Emiko Atsumi (1979) has investigated why Japanese employees spend so much time with work-related people after work. She challenges common assumptions that link this behaviour with a uniquely Japanese psyche grounded in in-group solidarity and company loyalty (Atsumi, 1979: 63). Instead, Atsumi reveals that the involvement in the creation of after-work interpersonal relationships (*tsukiai*) differs greatly according to the size of the company, one's function and the perception of one's future career. After-work activities are most common among the generalist employees of the middle management of large companies, for whom these networks function as a 'culturally acceptable means of seeking success' (ibid. 68). *Tsukiai* relationships are of a transient, superficial, instrumental and formal nature and are clearly distinguished from affective, lasting, relaxed informal friendship relationships (ibid. 65-66). This point relates back to my earlier suggestion that the Japanese are highly skilful at playing the relationship game.

Wives are completely excluded from after-work socialising. This brings my discussion to the gendered division of home and work in Japan.²¹ Rosenberger describes how the household, portrayed as the 'centre of harmony and nurture, and the workplace, the centre of competition and stressful human relations', rooted in the ideology of the Tokugawa elite, are still idealisations for many Japanese (Rosenberger, 1997:156). The government, often followed by the media, continues to link men with production and women with consumption. Tourism, fashion and culture are the main areas targeted for individual female consumption. However, the same media also promote an individual consumer-oriented lifestyle in sharp contrast with the production-oriented family-centred policy of the government. Women between twenty-five and sixty-five, either travelling in small informal peer groups or visiting with non-school going children, make up the majority of tourists on Miyajima (see Chapter 4 and 5).

Returning to the question of time, how is time spent travelling understood in Japan? In her study about the cultural role played by department stores in Japan, Millie Creighton (1998) demonstrates how leisure time is frequently equated with productive use of time. The educational use of one's free time is particularly valued. According to the philosophy of the Seibu Saison

Group, for example, leisure time should be creative and productive like work (Creighton, 1998: 216-7). The leisure-industry in Japan has capitalised on the view that vague free time should be filled with content, preferably meaningful activities. Domestic travel is one of the most popular leisure activities (ASJA, 2001: 271), often with a high educational component. However, the Miyajima case study shows that activities tourists engage in on Miyajima are not always meaningful. This is especially true for the growing number of people who prefer to travel in informal groups.

In a recent study of tourist performances at the Taj Mahal, Edensor (1998) demonstrates that overall, tourists from Europe and northern America firmly distinguish between work and leisure time. Western package tourists often express frustration because 'the tourist quest for the authentic and the surprising are thwarted by the predictability and haste of the tour' (Edensor, 1998: 157-8). As Wanda, a twenty-nine year old pharmacist from London, puts it:

rather than a holiday it's rather working hard at getting an experience. I mean it's been quite gruelling. You haven't time to be ill or tired, you just have to keep going, keep moving (Edensor, 1998: 158).

For this tourist, the speed of the trip is seen as negative because it feels like work, which is associated with the regulation and exploitation of labour time and seen as an alienating experience.

Backpackers, who are far less regulated by spatio-temporal constraints, draw on an elaborate discourse of freedom, authenticity and individualism linked with independent travel when describing their visit to the Taj Mahal (Edensor, 1998: 112-13). However, is a journey made at a fast pace really less genuine or less authentic? Contemporary independent travellers can easily be regarded as the successors of the European elite who embarked on the Grand Tour before the industrialisation of travel at the end of the nineteenth century. Both groups consider travel as a physical as well as an educational experience to enrich the self. The idea of travel for individual self-realisation is relatively new in Japan. It is true that the first Buddhist pilgrims were solitary ascetic travellers, but these religious figures were also supposed to use their powers to help other members of society (see Chapter 1).

²¹ Elsewhere I have shown that this idealisation of the division between work and home lies at the base of inter-family conflicts in Japan (Daniels, forthcoming)

My data indicates that sociability is a key element of Japanese domestic travel. Travel companions, for example, vividly describe their expectations of famous sites and chat about their experiences afterwards. People constantly take each others' pictures, they taste local specialities together and make comments on the service in local establishments, and while shopping for souvenirs they compare prices and share knowledge and tastes. During my fieldwork on the island, I did not encounter Japanese tourists travelling alone. As the case studies above show, the elderly and school children choose to travel in large organised groups while travel in smaller informal parties is becoming increasingly common. However, I want to stress that these conclusions are problematic when applied to international travel because growing numbers of Japanese choose to travel abroad on their own.²²

Like the Japanese, Indian tourists prefer travelling in groups, mainly with family members, because it enables them to share experiences (Edensor, 1998). However, contrary to the Japanese, most Indian tourists show no interest in guided tours. Instead, they prefer to move fast through the space, while laughing and chatting with each other. In Edensor's opinion, Indian visitors travel fast because they are not slowed down by the romantic gaze and the reflective contemplation typical of western tourism. Indian tourists primarily visit sites because of their fame: their renowned beauty and history. As such the Taj Mahal 'has been witnessed, admired, and is part of the day out but of no affective importance' (Edensor; 1998: 114-5). Additionally, famous sites offer Indian tourists an opportunity to express national pride and a collective identity (ibid. 1998: 126). Similarly, Japanese tourists on Miyajima Island swiftly move around on the island, while taking in the famous sites.

Japanese travellers have a long history of visiting authorised, famous places. We have seen that Miyajima was already well known as a famous place in the seventeenth century. The collective gaze directed at these sites is primarily non-analytical, but this does not mean that visitors are not interested in receiving information. As we have seen above, in Japan pursuing educational activities during one's free time is highly regarded. On Miyajima a range of learning experiences is on offer, but they are all integrated into the overall choreography of collective movement.

²²During the period 1998-2000, for example, I have sighted an increasing number of Japanese travellers exploring London on their own. A discussion of the characteristics of Japanese travelling abroad falls outside the scope of my thesis.

The fast pace at which Japanese tourists travel does not necessarily mean that they are enjoying the trip less or that their travel experiences are less authentic. While moving swiftly through space, Japanese tourists repeat a series of embodied practices, such as taking photographs and buying souvenirs, and creating and recreating a network of places. In short, contemporary Japanese domestic tourism is a tourism of containment. My discussion about pilgrimage in Chapter 1 springs to mind here. The completion of a circuit of sites was significant in reaching the desired state of becoming one with the Buddha. Moreover, pilgrims carried a special book to collect the stamp of every shrine or temple visited along the circuit. These days this practice is still common among pilgrims, but any tourist can collect stamps to commemorate their trip at a range of places as diverse as stations, museums and tourist information offices.²³ The fact that it remains important to have visited the famous sites on the list points at continuity between traditional pilgrimage and contemporary mass-tourism. However, I agree with Formanek (1998) that too much has been read into this connection. Travelling by car, train or plane, and the widespread use of modern media technologies, have changed Japanese people's perception of space and time.²⁴

The development of the railway in Europe during the nineteenth century also embodied novel ideas about time, place and technology (Schivelbusch, 1979). Abstract, homogeneous time exteriorised in the clock has been both the requisite and the model for the development of modern technology in northern Europe since the eighteenth century. Through industrialisation and the use of machines, the rhythms of clocks became internalised in the human body (Thompson, 1967). Urry shows that the development of mass travel and the increasing complexity of metropolitan life since the end of the nineteenth century contributed to the power of clock-time which became seen as a metaphor for 'modern times' (Urry, 2000: 111-2). In Japan the western linear time framework was officially introduced at the end of the nineteenth century as part of a far-reaching modernisation project (Chapter 1).

Until then the main means of transport used to be the ship, but the modern government started with the development of a nation-wide railway network, in parallel with the establishment of a national post-system (Kanzaki, 1997: 188). This modern nationwide railway-system democratised

²³ Tourists may carry around a special stamp book available in most stationary shop. Many tourist destinations also provide a pamphlet with ample space left for stamps.

²⁴ See Schivelbusch (1979) for an account of how the physical speed of train travel effected people's perception of time and space in Europe during the end of the 19th century

public travel and led to an unprecedented growth of the domestic tourist industry. The history of popular tourist destinations such as Miyajima reflects this development. Modern communication media have reduced the distance between the periphery and cities in Japan even further. We have seen how on Miyajima the locals have access to the same information as the tourists who visit them and they experiment with that knowledge to enrich the island's economy. For a large number of Japanese domestic tourists media fame is an important criteria in deciding to visit a certain place. Increased speed and accessible information has diminished the distance between places.

Velocity is a key element of the collective consumption of tourist space in Japan. Today extremely efficient highways, high-speed railways and aeroplane networks enable swift, convenient travel throughout the country. The several weeks it formerly took to travel to a certain destinations have been drastically reduced. In recent years, speed has been repeatedly linked with the post-modern traveller. Rojek, for example, argues that movement is one of the main motives for travel. He draws on Virilio's work about the role of speed in contemporary culture and argues that 'it is not the authenticity of sites that lures us on but rather the hunger for ever-new distractions' (Rojek, 1997: 56). Most Japanese tourists I encountered on Miyajima can easily be branded post-modern tourists. I agree that movement is a key element of Japanese travel, but I am sceptical about the appropriateness of post-modern theories of speed (Virilio, 1986, 1991, 1997) and the notion of space-time compression (Harvey, 1989) as a framework to investigate this phenomenon. Crang and Thrift (2000) formulate a strong critique of the post-modern 'narrative of speed-up'. The ever-increasing speed of transportation and communication media has changed our notion of space and time, but Crang and Thrift question whether these transformations have to lead to apocalyptic visions and overstatements of alienation, destabilisation or virtualization. They reveal that the post-modern speed-up thesis feeds on an extreme form of technological determinism (Crang and Thrift, 2000: 17-8). This brings us back to a key assumption about technology, so well refuted by Pfaffenberger (1992), namely that machines inevitably contaminate the authentic human essence.

The French Philosopher Michel Serres (Serres and Latour, 1995) expresses some intriguing views about time. He argues that it is necessary to make a clear distinction between the experience of time and the measurement of time. Time is not flat, but 'time flows in an extraordinarily complex, unexpected, complicated way' (Serres and Latour, 1995: 48-60). Attfield

denounces, in a similar manner, researchers across the disciplines who have for too long worked with clock time as a base, reinforcing the notion of it as 'linear and straightforward. There is now increasing interest in researching 'subjective time', which is perceived as 'fragmented, contradictory and culturally specific' (Attfield, 2000: 235). Serres uses the stream-metaphor to illustrate his point, saying that time simultaneously flows and percolates. This idea resonates the concept of contextualised time, as explained by the famous Japanese Buddhist scholar Dōgen who lived during the twelfth century. Dōgen depicts time as a flowing stream, related to all concrete things in the world. He points at the synchronicity of time, saying that 'in the now is everything that exists already there; also, the temporary like past, present and future is combined in it (Shimada, 1994: 79-80). Today the cyclic notion of time linked with lucky and unlucky events continues to influence the everyday life of contemporary Japanese (see Chapter 1). Astrological calendars with practical guidelines are, for instance, consulted during important life-cycle events such as birth, weddings or death as well as during periods of transition and change such as building a new house or going on a trip.

Finally, I want to return to my initial discussion of the two major anthropological theories about tourism. We have seen that Japanese tourists are habitually portrayed as ludic pilgrims and/or nostalgic modern urban travellers. Rather than situating the contemporary Japanese tourist at the end of an evolutionary chain from pilgrim, nostalgic, alienated traveller to post-modern tourist, I propose that these are sensibilities which may be found within the same person when travelling. It is correct to say that Japanese travel, like most other leisure activities, has a religious origin. However, travel today is a multidimensional, socio-economic phenomenon that includes the religious, the cultural, the economic, the political and the symbolic. Japanese tourists are well-informed urban travellers who briskly consume a myriad of visual and material experiences together with relatives, friends or colleagues. They combine a visit to the famous sites with a selection of other social activities. On Miyajima, they may ride the cable car to the top of the mountains, stroll around in the Maple Tree Valley Park or shop for souvenirs in the arcade. Sociability is a major aspect of the trip and people move in small groups at a relatively fast pace without being particularly contemplative about their experiences.

Chapter 4 Souvenirs; The Material Culture of Travel

Processes of personification in the souvenir shop

1. Introduction: Souvenirs and Gift Giving

Shopping for souvenirs forms an integral part of the experience of travellers all over the world. The Japanese case studies introduced in Chapter 3 also indicate this. However, as Lury (1997) has pointed out correctly the majority of studies about tourism have been largely uninterested in the material culture of travel. They

have tended to take for granted the way in which the culture of others is bound into the physical confines of the objects, is inscribed in its very contours, in the practices of acquisition, collection and display (Lury, 1997: 76).

Recently, two edited volumes have tried to fill this void. These are, firstly, *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds* (Phillips and Steiner, 1999) and secondly, *Souvenirs: The Material Culture of Tourism* (Hitchcock and Teague, 2000). Both bodies of work explicitly take as their starting point *Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expressions from the Fourth World* (Graburn, 1976), the long-standing classic about the changing production of traditional arts within the context of cross-cultural exchange. I agree that the authority of this work cannot be stressed enough. However, it is curious that, although twenty-five years of fascinating research developments, in particular, in the study of material culture lie in between, both successors don't really succeed in exceeding their model. How can we account for this?

A first, general critique, that applies equally to all three works, is that too often tourism is equated with international travel and more particularly, people from Europe and North America visiting non-industrial societies. Why, for example, are so few studies concerned with the material culture of 'domestic' travel in western and non-western contexts? An exception is, for instance, Edensor's recent research in India (Edensor, 1998) that clearly demonstrates the long tradition and the distinctive local developments of domestic travel. Secondly, the focus in the above volumes is on the production process, while few papers look at the way the material culture of tourism is actually circulated and consumed. In the introduction to *Souvenirs* Michael Hitchcock claims that for many tourists the only contact with the local community occurs during the purchase of souvenirs (Hitchcock, 2000: 6) and that the meanings associated with souvenirs are often negotiated in the actual exchange between vendors and customers (ibid.9). Is it not surprising then that none of the contributors in this volume focuses on the exchanges in retail sites? Why is it so unusual to find work that investigates souvenirs from the viewpoint of the tourist-consumer? One possible

explanation might be that research grounded in profound ethnographic fieldwork that can trace the complexities involved in these interactions is still rare.

A final crucial point I want to make is that most studies dealing with souvenirs totally ignore the end consumption of these goods in people's homes. Recent research in material culture has pointed at the significance of the home in mediating meanings attributed to objects (Chevalier, 1998; 1999; Attfield, 2000; Miller, forthcoming). My discussion about souvenirs in Japanese homes in Chapter 7 draws on this body of work and aims to give proper attention to the contradictions and ambiguities surrounding the material culture of the home.

When objects of travel are discussed in western literature about tourism, they are commonly interpreted as pieces of evidence for authentic travel experiences, not that dissimilar from religious charms. The influence of the two authoritative theories about tourism, namely, that people travel in search of authenticity and that travel is a kind of pilgrimage based on the reversal of everyday life (see Chapter 3) is evident here. Littrell, for example, argues that tourists purchase crafts and other souvenirs because they 'serve as tangible evidence of having found the authentic and as a reminder of activities not part of the tourists' daily routines at home' (Littrell et al., 1993: 198). Shenhav-Keller suggests that for Jewish tourist pilgrims in Israel, souvenirs are not just tangible evidence for the trip but also 'an element of identity'. The souvenir becomes 'an integral part of the centre, a symbolic expression of Israeliness and the spirituality of the place' (Shenhav-Keller, 1995: 149-51). Studies that take the tourist-cum-pilgrim thesis as a starting point tend to forget that today religion is only one among many possible motivations for travel.

Another assumption commonly made by western researchers is that souvenirs are purchased for personal consumption. A lone exception is Mars and Mars' (2000) recent study published in *Souvenirs* (Hitchcock and Teague, 2000) about ceramic souvenirs from Blackpool bought by working class tourists between 1880 and 1950s. Cheap ornaments with images or the crest of Blackpool imprinted were institutionalised as proper gifts for daughters to bring home for their mothers as an expression of their affection. In the home these gifts were proudly displayed as part of ceramic collections that demonstrated the mother's fondness to others (Mars and Mars, 2000: 99-100). This article clearly shows that within the western context, souvenirs can also be bought as gifts that play a role in the creation of social relations, in this case inter-family female networks. This study is also uncommon in that it attempts to trace the consumption of souvenirs all the way into the home.

Most commentators define Japanese souvenirs as the successors of religious charms that were brought home as gifts for those left behind, who often sponsored part of the trip. Some researchers claim that today, in a similar fashion, Japanese people embarking on a trip receive travel money from relatives and friends and that souvenirs have to be brought back for those donors (Grabum, 1983: 52-53; Hendry, 1993: 36). My data suggest that giving money to travellers is not - or no longer - a widespread practice, at least in the case of domestic travel.¹ Returning to the presumed continuity between pilgrimage and tourism in Japan, the Japanese word for souvenir *omiyage* (a charm from a Shrine) points at a historical connection between sacred objects brought back from pilgrimages and contemporary souvenirs. However, as I have argued before, religion is only one aspect of contemporary Japanese domestic travel. Moreover, these days *omiyage* is commonly written with Chinese characters that refer to the more general 'local product' (*tokusan*). What is most important to remember for my discussion here is that Japanese souvenirs were traditionally bought as gifts linked with a place or locality. The stress is less on memory and the individual, characteristic of the western notion of the souvenir.

Giving souvenirs is significant in the creation and consolidation of social relations and networks. This has prompted some commentators to call Japan a 'souvenir culture' in which 'the giving and receiving of presents, form a very important part of everyday social relations and in the Japanese economy as a whole' (Moeran, 1983: 99). Purchasing a souvenir for others is more an obligation than a free choice. As, Naoko, a female artist living on Miyajima in her thirties, puts it:

When one goes on a trip one has to bring back a souvenir because one thinks: 'when that person went on a trip he brought me something, so now I have to return that favour.' Even if one does not want to bring anything.

Shopping during holiday times has been described as something people do 'when free from other burdens, or the need for particular items' (Miller, 1998: 68). But for the majority of Japanese tourists shopping is seen as a necessity. They are very conscious of having to bring home appropriate gifts for family, friends and colleagues.

Souvenirs are important gift items in Japan. Nitta (1992) argues that Japanese travellers, as opposed to their American counterparts, who are more self-centred, buy souvenirs for others in

¹ Some elderly informants told me they still present relatives and friends with travel money placed in the appropriate envelopes. Most children I spoke with on Miyajima also received travel money from their parents. However, on the whole, it seems that these days it is mainly international travellers who continue to receive travel money

order to share their experiences at home. This custom is traced back to Japanese pilgrims who were obliged to bring back charms for sponsors in their community. Nitta makes a distinction between recognisable local specialities such as Hawaiian shirts and macadamia nuts and products that are not associated with Hawaii, such as well-known brands of whiskey or designer clothes (Nitta, 1992: 206-9). However, the reader is largely left in the dark about the reasons why tourists choose to bring home two different kinds of souvenirs. Kanzaki (1997), who similarly claims that Japanese tourists mainly purchase gifts, criticises Nitta exactly for failing to point out that each type of souvenir serves a particular purpose. In his view, local specialities are given as proof of the foreign trip while goods not associated with the site such as liquor are brought back for those left behind (Kanzaki, 1997: 212).

Kanzaki (1997) and Nitta (1993) are right in pointing out that souvenirs play a major role in the Japanese gift economy, but like most Japanese scholars they fail to point out that Japanese tourists also buy things for themselves. Moeran's account of Japanese tourists abroad (1983) sets a better example because he makes a distinction between souvenirs bought as gifts and those purchased for personal consumption. He interprets the latter as tangible reminders of personal experiences. Often these personal souvenirs function as status symbols, which also explains the popularity of foreign brand products (Moeran, 1983:99-100). My data, similarly, suggest that souvenirs tourists consume on Miyajima can be divided into two different types. Firstly, standard items devoid of personal connotations, often food, that refer to the locality and are purchased as gifts. A second group of souvenirs are items that embody a variety of personal experiences, memories and perceptions. These souvenirs may also be used as markers of taste and status. On Miyajima shamoji are constructed as famous products (Chapter 3) and as such they are appropriate as impersonal gifts linked with the locality. However, they are also among the most popular items bought for personal consumption. Shamoji are multi-faceted objects and can be bought to embody a range of personal experiences. As we have seen in Chapter 3 they may be purchased as practical kitchen utensils by housewives (case study 1), as products linked with the charisma of famous people by teenagers (case study 2) or as good luck symbols by a mother with young children (case study 4).

The distinction between these two types of souvenirs forms the starting point of Chapter 5, which concentrates on retail outlets where people shop for souvenirs. The majority of shops on Miyajima sell a range of souvenirs that are connected with the place and are typically bought as gifts for those left at home. However, in recent years there has been a shift in tourist consumption

behaviour towards buying souvenirs that have more personal connotations for oneself. In this chapter I will consider retailing and marketing strategies on Miyajima that have developed to cope with these changes. The discussion will centre on the Shamoji House (*Shakushi no Ie*)² the only shop on Miyajima which explicitly promotes itself as a shamoji speciality shop. The success story of this shop stands in sharp contrast with the difficulties faced by the other shops on the island. Thus far, the research of consumption in retail spaces has mainly discussed the department store (see MacPherson, 1998 for an Asian perspective) and its contemporary equivalent the shopping mall (see Lowe, 1993 about the Merry Hill Centre in the UK). More recent studies have also dealt with more mundane places of shopping such as the supermarket (Miller, 1998) or the cheap jack (Miller, Jackson, Thrift, Holbrook and Rowlands, 1998). However, temporary or small-scale retail outlets such as the market stall or the souvenir shop are still largely underdeveloped areas of investigation. An exception is Sherry and McGrath's comparative study of two gift stores in the States (Sherry and McGrath, 1989). Their findings based on a detailed ethnographic study will be analysed throughout this paper.

Retailing is a significant phase in the vertical chain of provisioning of the Miyajima shamoji (Fine and Leopold, 1993: 5). Chapter 5 will investigate what du Gay has called 'the tactics of consumption' (du Gay, 1996: 168) looking at the work force in a retail site and the social process of selling. Within the literature on tourism attention has been paid to the souvenir shop, but, generally, this takes the form of short listing a variety of souvenirs on sale at a certain site (Shields, 1991: 133; Rojek, 1993: 196). Few studies concentrate on the actual exchange between sales people and buyers in the shop. Blundell (1994) studies Canadian souvenir shops selling aboriginal objects as authentic souvenirs "from Canada", but she bases her analysis on textual and visual representations. I found only two ethnographic studies conducted in souvenir shops and both are set in Israel. The sociologist Shelly Shenhav-Keller (1995) analyses practices in Maskit, a souvenir shop that sells crafts to mainly Jewish tourists in Tel-Aviv. The second example is an anthropological study of the Palestinian tourist market in Jerusalem (Bowman, 1996). This study differs from the previous one in that the focus is not so much on the exchange in the souvenir shop as on strategies employed by Palestinian sales people in order to attract customers in an extremely competitive environment.

² I will use 'Shamoji House', a literal translation of the Japanese shop name 'Shakushi no Ie', instead of the 'Spatula Center' the name used in English language promotional material for the shop.

My study will focus on souvenir shops located in the shopping arcade in front of the Itsukushima Shrine. I will first look at the competition between these shops and new retail developments across the bay. Secondly, I will conduct a detailed material culture study of two souvenir shops on the island.

2. Souvenir Shopping in Front of the Shrine

Figures of the Miyajima Town Bureau for Commerce and Industry for 1997 reveal the existence of 63 tourist-related shops on the island (Miyajimachō shōkōkai, 1997). Most shops sell shamoji among an assortment of other souvenirs. However, a few recently established shops focus on a totally different range of products for sale to tourists. For example, a shop that sells modern leather clothing, sunglasses or jewellery at reduced prices or another one that only offers famous traditional products from Kyoto. Another exception is the group of shops that specialise in *Momiji Manjū*, maple leaf shaped buns filled with bean paste, and generally do not sell other products. Finally, we can distinguish a small number of shops dealing in expensive hand-made Miyajima woodcrafts, for example, wooden turnery or carved trays. Often a craftsman produces crafts in a small atelier in or next to the shop. Their clientele consists of a small elite of professionals practising traditional arts, such as the tea ceremony. These people visit Miyajima in order to acquire hand-made crafts. Because of the slow turnover of these types of goods, craft shops on Miyajima have great difficulties in surviving.

Souvenir shops are located along the tourist routes to the island's main attractions, but the highest concentration of souvenir shops can be found in a pedestrian shopping street called '*Omote Sandō Shōtenga*', literally 'shopping street on the path leading to the front gate of the shrine' (Plate 4.1). The term *shōtengai* refers to a formal street association consisting of a group of neighbouring shops. Larke shows that there are more than 21.000 of these commercial street organisations in Japan that may vary enormously according to size and activities covered. The shops belonging to a street association may co-operate in various matters ranging from cleaning and decorating to promoting and developing the street and even political lobbying (Larke, 1994: 130-34). Some street associations employ material culture to express their communality. They, for example,

have their own specially designed shopping bags and wrapping paper. Some also provide piped background music through loudspeakers along the street. Street ornaments such as benches, statues and flowers, and public amenities such as telephones and toilets, are also often organised and planned (Larke, 1994: 133).



Plate 4.1: Shoppers hunting for souvenirs in the shopping arcade.

On Miyajima a commercial shopping street leads to the Itsukushima Shrine, the main tourist attraction. Rojek has demonstrated how, for example, in Israel the development of commercial activity close to sacred places is criticised for degrading the site (Rojek, 1993: 202). However, as we have seen in Chapter 1, religion and commerce are not considered incompatible in Japan. On the contrary, Miyajima exemplifies how monks and other religious professionals played a central role in the establishment of local economies. In Early Modern Japan (1600-1868) traders and craftsmen opened shops close to major shrines or temples to sell their goods to pilgrims. Commercial towns which consequently developed are literally called 'towns in front of the entrance gate' (*monzenmachi*). Today, shopping for souvenirs remains a key element of visits to tourist spots, often temples or shrines. Like pilgrims in early modern Japan, contemporary tourists visiting religious centres pass through narrow streets cramped with souvenir stalls, -often the commercial activity even continues within the precincts of the temple or shrine- before reaching the sanctuary.

In recent years the street association on Miyajima has striven to lift the shopping street out of the shadow of the Itsukushima Shrine by developing it as a tourist resource in itself. A recent study about the shopping arcade conducted by the Miyajima Town Bureau for Commerce and Industry, published in March 1997, lists several changes necessary to accomplish that aim (Miyajimachō shōkōkai, 1997). Some of the proposals aim at reviving the street at large and creating a feeling of togetherness and pride among the shops involved. One suggestion, for example, calls for a nickname and a symbol to represent the shopping street. The ceremony to display a Giant shamoji in the arcade linked with the change of the name of the shopping street in April 1997 should be seen in this light. It is also stressed that PR activities surrounding the shopping arcade need to be launched. In 1999, in correspondence with a suggestion in the report, a cartoon map that introduces visitors to all the shops in the shopping arcade was distributed among tourists (Map 4).³

In November 1998, the arcade organised a Shamoji Art Exhibition. During a local festival yearly held in August visitors were invited to produce a work of art on a shamoji. More than 120

³This map shows two enlarged *manga*-like characters looking down on the shopping arcade. One conversation balloon says: 'Oh yeh, shopping is really great fun!!' while the other reads: 'Wow, there are lots of superb shops!'

contributions from all over Japan were collected and in November they were all displayed around the giant shamoji in the shopping arcade. Commercial sites have a long tradition of being used as venues for cultural and artistic activities in Japan. Creighton, for instance, points at the way Japanese department stores have played an educating role since their emergence (Creighton, 1998: 207).

We have seen that most visitors to Miyajima move around at a fast pace. As a consequence, many islanders involved in the tourists industry complained about the short time visitors spend on the island. Mr. Miyato, the 82 years old shopkeeper of the Yamato souvenir shop, for example, blames the railways for speeding up travel. In his words:

Well, I believe it all began with the development of the transportation system. It is not about really travelling for pleasure. People no longer like the relaxed travel (*yutori*) from the past. Next, next! more and more, well, it is not like a real journey anymore. I think it is all a bit boring, the bullet train is also boring. Just on and on....

Mrs. Fujii, a guide in her fifties who escorts groups around the island, on the other hand, sees the car as the main wrongdoer.

These days everybody is used to travelling by car. They have no time to look around relaxed. A tour ends more or less in one-hour. I pick them up at the ferry and bring them straight to the Shrine and perhaps to the Senjōkaku Hall. Well, that's about it.

These kinds of comments should be seen within the context of a community economically dependent on tourists on short trips and with only a limited interest in the sites. Negative reactions like those above are fuelled by nostalgic feelings for a past era associated with a slower pace of life. But was travel really that much better in the past? Travel on foot was often dangerous and, until fairly recently, free movement was never more than an idle dream for the majority of Japanese people. Moreover, it was exactly the development of better transport networks that has enabled more people to travel and made remote parts of the country accessible. The economy of tourist destinations located in the periphery such as Miyajima has hugely benefited from these innovations.

The shopping arcade is conveniently located en route back to the ferry to cater for the hurried shoppers. Moreover, most souvenir shops on Miyajima, as elsewhere in Japan, offer a mail delivery service to send gifts nation-wide. Likewise, the Miyajima post-office sells and sends

boxes of local specialities such as fresh oysters. Delivery services are hugely popular, because without luggage the journey back home becomes more pleasant. Moreover, Japanese transportation companies go out of their way to make the movement through space as convenient and enjoyable as possible. An example of this are the souvenir shops and food halls, but also whole department stores and shopping malls, conveniently located in train stations across Japan. Railway companies further aim to add value to the experience of travelling, for example, by offering special lunch boxes or by producing badges or stamps associated with a certain line that can be collected. All these examples provide evidence for the hypothesis that the movement in between departure and destination forms a substantial part of the experience of travel (see Chapter 3).

Services that spare the hurried international traveller the trouble of buying and carrying gifts around should also be seen in this light. In most Japanese travel agencies, customers can purchase catalogues that depict a range of appropriate souvenirs from a particular region of the world. These gifts can be ordered by telephone, fax or mail before actually going abroad. The following captions were written on the first page of one of these catalogues: 'If you order your souvenirs before departure, your trip abroad will be convenient and light', 'All the assistance you need for a pleasant trip' and 'Coming home effortlessly'. Souvenirs will arrive at people's homes on the desired day and time.

All along the way back to the ferry, and even inside the ferry terminal, souvenirs can be purchased. Moreover, in Miyajimaguchi, opposite the bay close to the wharf where ferries leave for Miyajima, a whole industry developed to cater for those hurried tourists who did not find the time to buy souvenirs on Miyajima. Mr. Kidani, the owner of the Ōkinadō, the most popular sweet shop on this side of the bay, describes the kind of tourists that buy gifts in Miyajimaguchi as follows:

Well, these tourists do not buy anything on Miyajima because they think it would be better if they did not have to carry anything. They will go back by train and this shop is closer to the train station. And those people who put their car in the parking lot can fetch the car and drive to this shop. They do not have to carry any luggage. Well, it is rather convenient.

The fact that tourists shop for souvenirs from Miyajima in Miyajimaguchi evokes questions about the link between souvenirs, place and authenticity. Does it matter where souvenirs are purchased? Do people differentiate between souvenirs from Miyajima sold on the island, in Miyajimaguchi, in Hiroshima but also anywhere in Japan? What is the motivation for tourists to

buy widely available goods as a souvenir from Miyajima? Through the following discussion of shopping experiences in a souvenir shopping centre in Miyajimaguchi I hope to clarify some of the questions posed

3. The Miyajima Gāden Shopping Centre: Food, the ultimate gift

The Hiroden Miyajima Gāden⁴ shopping centre is the biggest retail development in Miyajimaguchi across the bay. Miyajima Gāden caters for tourists in a hurry who have visited Miyajima but still need to buy some souvenirs before returning home. Mr. Matsumoto, the manager, revealed that the most popular item in the Miyajima Gāden is, as on Miyajima, the Momiji Manjū maple-shaped buns.⁵ Three of the tourists discussed in the case studies in Chapter 3 bought Momiji Manjū for neighbours and friends or colleagues. I observed many other tourists leaving Miyajima with several boxes of these sweets. Why are Momiji Manjū so appropriate as gifts from Miyajima? Creighton's (1991) study of the types of gifts Japanese buy for formal, more 'traditional', gift-giving occasions such as the mid-yearly gift season, and more recently established gift-exchange days such as Valentine's Day offers some valuable clues. In her view, in the latter case, personalised gifts that are an expression of individual feelings of love, affection and friendship are considered appropriate. By contrast Momiji Manjū fit the other category of gifts whose selection is not determined by personal sentiment but by price in accordance with the status of the receiver (Creighton, 1991: 680). They are a well-known easily-recognisable speciality from Miyajima which are relatively cheap (500 yen or 2.5 pounds for a box of 5 buns) and devoid of personal connotations.

Originally Momiji Manjū were famous products produced and distributed on Miyajima⁶, but these days the buns are also associated with Hiroshima City, the closest urban centre, and Hiroshima Prefecture at large. Many tourists I encountered on Miyajima told me they already bought or were planning to buy Momiji Manjū in Hiroshima. Yamadaya, one of the well-established Momiji Manjū companies based on Miyajima, for example, operates several venues in Hiroshima City.

⁴Hiroden is an abbreviation for Hiroshima Dentetsu, the railway company that connects Miyajimaguchi with downtown Hiroshima. All the sales people in the shopping centre are employees of the railway company.

⁵The fact that five other shops close to the ferry terminal also specialise in the sweet bun draws further attention to its popularity as a souvenir.

⁶It is said that around 1907 Momiji Manjū were invented by the owner of a traditional inn located in Maple Tree Valley Park on Miyajima. Pragmatic issues of preservation and transportation were crucial to the start of its production which began after the railway opened up the area (Kanzaki, 1997: 197-200).

Moreover, shops in major train stations, department stores and international hotels throughout Hiroshima Prefecture sell Momiji Manjū. Efficient distribution networks together with the nation-wide spread of department store chains have made the same goods available anywhere in Japan. Today, Momiji Manjū are also sold nation-wide in major urban centres such as Osaka and Tokyo.

My data suggest that, irrespective of the actual place of production or purchase, souvenirs, brought home as gifts from a trip only need to be visually linked, for example, through labels or images with the place visited. The following discussion with Mr Matsumoto about the merchandise on sale in the Miyajima Gāden souvenir centre elucidates this widespread practice:

Q: Are all products on sale here linked with Miyajima?

A: Well, among these products some are not related at all. But even if things are unrelated, well you see there are labels. When one comes to Miyajima there are these kind of goods [points at a display of various pickles] that can be sold anywhere. Because "Miyajima" is written on the label they are sold as goods from Miyajima. So, even if the contents is exactly the same, if you change the letters and the picture you can also sell them in Kyoto.

Lury argues that through printing a place name or illustration on the object itself or its wrapping it becomes bound to a specific place-elsewhere (Lury, 1997: 82-3). Similarly, mass-produced souvenirs that have no particular place of dwelling are bound with Miyajima through the use of labels and images (Plate 4.2). This practice bears resemblance to the way stamps and more recently also labels are employed to authenticate Miyajima shamoji (Chapter 2). Shamoji produced on Miyajima, but by extension also anywhere else, that have Miyajima printed on them can be taken home as evidence of a trip there. Mr. Matsumoto, the manager of the souvenir shopping centre, argues that tourists know that the products with a Miyajima label are not necessarily produced there. He also stresses that this technique works particularly well for food.

The consumption of food is a key element of travel in Japan. This can take the form of buying lunch-boxes on the train, tasting special local dishes, participating in a food festival, such as the Oyster Festival held in November on Miyajima, or bringing home famous food products from a certain region. Of course, this is by no means a uniquely Japanese phenomenon. All over the world tourists consume local foods and take them home as souvenirs. My fieldwork conducted among urban consumers in the Osaka region suggests that those at the receiving end of souvenirs also appreciate food items most (see Chapter 7).



Plate 4.2: Stickers link pickles sold everywhere in Japan with Miyajima.

Food is particularly liked as a souvenir because it can be consumed and shared with others at home. Mrs. Mori, for example, explains what kind of gifts received from trips she prefers:

The best is food stuff. Like something odd from a certain place which one cannot find anywhere else.

Mrs. Mori's preference for food items that cannot be found elsewhere contradicts my earlier statement that the place of production of goods is not relevant. The following case study illustrates that souvenirs for others are not always devoid of personal connotations, it all depends on who the receiver will be. In other words whether these gifts objectify impersonal or personal relationships.

Mr. Oka, a researcher in his forties from Hiroshima, explains the kind of goods he looks for to bring home as souvenirs for his family. He gives an example of a recent trip he made to Wakayama, a small town located south of Osaka.

Wakayama is famous for *umeboshi* [pickled plums]. These days you can get Wakayama *umeboshi* everywhere. So, I went to a small supermarket in the middle of nowhere surrounded by some farmhouses. I bought *umeboshi* there. They just gave me the amount I desired in a plastic pack.

The etiquette of wrapping is an important aspect of formal gift giving in Japan. It is considered an expression of respect for the receiver. Wrapping is, for example, included in the service in Japanese shops that commonly design their own wrapping paper and ditto carrier bags. Giving somebody a plain plastic bag filled with plums is definitely not in accordance with the Japanese formalities of gift-wrapping. Hendry (1993) has shown that 'the formal wrapping of a gift expresses a certain distance in the relationship, so to leave a present unwrapped is a way of expressing intimacy (Hendry, 1993: 24). Mr. Oka's pickled plums are rather similar to home-made goods that are turned into gifts in other societies such as a pot of plum-jam made by one's mother that somebody might receive for Christmas. Carrier argues that it is not necessary to wrap home-made Christmas gifts because they are already filled with sentiment during their production process (Carrier, 1993: 61). Similarly, in the example above the unwrapped plums from a village in Wakayama are considered more sentimental and personal than the nicely wrapped special gift edition from Mitsukoshi Department store in Tokyo.

Here, I want to pause and summarise the major points of my argument. Impersonal souvenirs linked with a place have been defined as the most popular gifts Japanese tourists take home. This might be either items which have a long established historical connection with a certain place, often their original place of production, as well as products produced elsewhere turned into local specialities through the use of labels. However, some people search for souvenirs for relatives or close friends that are invested with sentiment. The remainder of this chapter will analyse retail strategies employed by retailers in the main shopping street on Miyajima to compete with the shops in Miyajimaguchi. A comparison of two souvenir shops in the arcade will illustrate how the local retail community attempts to adapt with various degrees of success to changing consumption patterns among tourists.

4. The Material Culture of Souvenir Shops

Of course, the kind of souvenir tourists buy also depends on their budget. Often the number of people for whom one must bring home something influences tourists' choice. Mrs. Fujimoto from Hiroshima City explains she normally has a fixed budget and:

So, it depends on the quantity. If you have, for example, 12 people you divide it by twelve, in case of ten, ten and so on.

We have seen that the shopping street co-operative on Miyajima aspires to transform the overall image of its street. Next, we will turn to retail strategies at the micro level. Of the thirty-eight shops located in the arcade one is a household goods shop, eleven are food related venues like restaurants or coffee shops and twenty-six are souvenir shops. The study introduced earlier suggests that the shopping arcade can only become more modern if all the shops involved are willing to make changes (The Miyajima Bureau for Industry and Commerce, 1997). There are two main criticisms directed at practices in souvenir shops. Firstly, the practice of selling a certain product only because one's neighbour is selling it is severely criticised because it caused tourists to conclude that the arcade is boring. Therefore, the study recommended that, in future, each shop should clearly define its target group, offer superior products and invest in product development. Similarly, Bowman (1996) has described how souvenir shops in the Tel-Aviv tourist market all look alike. Every time a particular selling technique or a certain product seems successful, it is immediately copied by all the shops (Bowman, 1996: 90). Of course, it can also be argued that selling the same product is part of a local strategy to create the impression that this product is the most appropriate famous souvenir from a particular place. We have seen in

Chapter 3 how, in a similar fashion, an authentic link between shamoji and the island has been created through an over-abundance of shamoji-shapes.

Secondly, the study scrutinises the physical outlook of the majority of the shops. Especially, the way some shops focus only on their façade:

For example, they just place those things they want to sell at the front of their shop. We need to be more concerned about the overall outlook of our shops, and with whether the presentation of the products, the brightness of the lights, etc. makes them easily accessible or not. We have to make our shops more aesthetic (Miyajimachō shōkōkai, 1997: 33).

The type of merchandise sold and the physical structure and the ambience of the souvenir shop are defined as the major factors in attracting customers.

An ethnographic investigation of souvenir shops in the arcade will further elucidate these points. My findings in the successful shamoji speciality shop, the Shamoji House, will be compared with observations in other shops, especially, the Joifuru Miyajima souvenir shop, my second field site in the shopping arcade. The Shamoji House is owned by Mr. Miyazato one of the two vice-presidents of Miyachū, the shamoji wholesale company discussed in Chapter 2.⁷ His wife, a housewife in her mid-fifties, has run the shop for more than twenty years.⁸ Two local women, both in their forties, work part-time as shop assistants. In the text I will refer to these three women as, respectively, the owner, assistant 1 and assistant 2. Joifuru Miyajima, the flagship-store of Miyachū, started business in 1959.⁹ Mrs. Okamoto, a Miyachū employee in her fifties, runs Joifuru, but the wives of both the president and the other vice-president of Miyachū rotate in helping out twice a month.

Joifuru Miyajima is typical of the cluttered souvenir shops in the shopping street. It sells, apart from shamoji and a range of wooden crafts, an assortment of inexpensive goods that are linked with Miyajima through labels and images. For example, plastic deer on wheels, mugs and towels with the image of the Grand Gate printed on them and an assortment of key holders. In the report

⁷For more than thirty years the shamoji wholesale company was headed by Yasuteru Miyazato. He followed his father as president of the company when he was only thirty-five years old because there was no other candidate old enough to take up the job. Later, two of Yasuteru's younger cousins were appointed vice-president.

⁹ *Joifuru* is Japanese-style English for joyful. According to Mr. Miyazato these kinds of words express a certain mood that helps to sell the products in the shop.

from the Miyajima Town Bureau for Commerce and Industry these goods are called '*omiyageyō shōhin*' (commodities used as souvenirs) defined as 'goods which prove to be bought on Miyajima because they have the name Miyajima or the picture of the Grand Gate printed on them' (Miyajimachō shōkōkai, 1997: 32). The impersonal labelled goods sold in Miyajimaguchi as in major cities all over Japan also belong to this category. These goods are contrasted with '*miyagehin*' defined as 'products which display good taste (*sensu no aru shōhin*) that one would like to introduce into one's life.' Even if similar goods may be found outside Miyajima, while using these objects [at home] one might remember (one's experience on Miyajima) and decide to return there (ibid.:32). Thus, shops should offer a bigger assortment of tasteful goods which tourists would like to buy as a personal memento of their trip. This hints at the fact that in Japan, as elsewhere, taste is a key element in making social distinctions (Bourdieu, 1984). Clammer has demonstrated how tastelessness is often equated with sameness in Japan and this

generates a need to create contrast and difference through the assertion of particularity, often expressed in Japan as tradition (Clammer, 1997: 98).

This explains why wooden goods are put forward as an example of tasteful goods in the same report (Miyajimachō shōkōkai, 1997: 32). It also helps in clarifying the popularity of the Shamoji House, a souvenir shop that actively promotes its image as a speciality shop where traditional crafts are on sale.

A brief look at the shopping practices of the growing numbers of foreigners visiting Miyajima offers an interesting comparison. Anne is an Australian female tourist in her thirties who teaches English in a private school in Osaka as part of a one year exchange program. Like most other foreign tourists I encountered, she complained about the excess of cheap tasteless souvenirs on display in most shops on the island. She told me she chose to buy her souvenirs in the Shamoji House just because it looked so different. The majority of souvenir shops in the arcade display cheap exotic goods such as curtains, kimono's or T-shirts with Japanese woodblock print images on them to attract foreigners. Shopkeepers explained that foreign tourists rarely buy souvenirs and, if they do, they opt for cheap things. I observed quite a few foreigners who bought postcards of the Miyajima scenery. A set of twelve cards with the most famous sights on the island sold for eight hundred yen (4 pounds) is popular. However, my data suggest that generally more expensive traditional crafts, that are easy recognisable as being Japanese, and especially *kokeshi* dolls, are most favoured by foreign tourists. The shopkeeper in Joifuru and the owner of

the Shamoji House added a collection of *kokeshi* dolls to their merchandise for this reason. Returning to Anne, she purchased three *kokeshi* dolls wearing kimono with a colourful maple leaf pattern in the Shamoji House. One for herself and two as presents for friends back home in Australia.

The merchandise on sale in the Shamoji House consists of high quality crafts mainly produced by local craftsmen. In the Shamoji House, customers find the broadest range of shamoji on Miyajima¹⁴, but the shop also offers an assortment of other spoon-like objects such as ladles, spaghetti scoops, salad scoops, soup and dessert spoons. There are also other wooden utensils on sale, for example, chopsticks, butter knives, forks and tea utensils. In addition, a range of traditional Miyajima hand-made crafts are on display. For example, clay bells (*dorei*) in a variety of shapes and sizes made by Mrs. Takei, Mr. Tanaka's colourful papier-mâché models of all the birds living on Miyajima or miniatures of the Grand Gate made by members of the Silver-Club, a group of elderly people producing crafts in the community centre.

A bilingual promotional leaflet illustrated with colour photographs of the shop carries the following heading: 'The Spatula Center: traditional handicrafts nurtured by professional hand and heart'. The text stresses the precious woods used and the manual production process of the products on sale. In her study of a souvenir shop in Israel, Shenhav-Keller (1995) shows that written advertisements that emphasise the originality of the shop through association with craftsmanship is an important element in the construction of authenticity. Two other elements she mentions are, firstly, the role of saleswomen in negotiating different meanings of Israeliness and secondly, the conscious creation of a museum-like atmosphere in the shop through style of arrangement of products and decorations (Shenhav-Keller, 1995: 145-48). I will return later to the role of the sales person in shops on Miyajima, but next I will have a closer look at the physical structure and the ambience of souvenir shops.

Through its structural design and atmosphere but also through the arrangement and wrapping of products, the Shamoji House promotes itself as a speciality shop selling high quality goods. Sherry and McGrath have argued that:

The built environment of the stores, from structural design and décor issues to object placement and rearrangement strategies, delivers a powerful message to all who enter (Sherry and McGrath, 1989: 161).

The façade of the Shamoji House really sticks out among the other shops in the shopping arcade. The owner of the Shamoji House proudly told me that before its opening approximately twenty years ago, a well-known craftsman was appointed to design the outlook of the shop. It has big showcase windows and glass doors that can be opened during the summer season (Plate 4.3). The inside of the shop is very spacious, allowing customers to move around easily between the products which are displayed in orderly fashion on dark wooden shelves along the walls or on racks made of the same material arranged in the middle of the space. Several small lights hanging from the ceiling create a relaxed atmosphere in the shop. There is also a small inside garden and seating space where customers can rest. The owner adores animals and an elderly longhaired white cat strolls nonchalantly around in the shop. Customers frequently pat the cat that has become a part of the atmosphere of the shop.¹⁰

Joifuru Miyajima, the second shop where I conducted fieldwork, serves as a good example of the outlook of the majority of other souvenir shops found on Miyajima as well as in many other tourist spots in Japan. Next to shamoji and other kitchen utensils, all produced by Miyachū, Joifuru displays a colourful eclectic mix of mainly cheap souvenirs and bric-a-brac. Although the front of the shop opens up completely the sheer volume of the items placed on a variety of tables and racks gives the shop a chaotic feel (Plate 4.4). Moreover, eye-catching displays on low tables covered with a red cloth in front of the shop partly block the entrance. The colours of the products and the decor, and the big neon lights give the shop an eerie brightness.

The arrangement and the packaging of the merchandise in the Shamoji House express its distinctive style. The display changes according to the season and every so often the products are completely re-arranged. Sherry and McGrath also observed the practice of frequently re-arranging the merchandise. They interpret this as 'at once a display strategy, a provision of challenge and suggestion to the problem-solving shopper, and a kaleidoscopic sensory experience' (Sherry and McGrath, 1989: 159). In the Shamoji House the re-arrangement of certain items sometimes results in an increase in sales. One of the shop assistants told me, for example, that when black and red lacquered teaspoons were placed together with similar bamboo spoons they sold better. In the Shamoji House, new products are introduced continuously. An example of this is a small bamboo shamoji with the words 'Buddha Shamoji'

¹⁰Sherry and McGrath have demonstrated how an elderly golden Labrador fulfils a similar role in one of the gift stores they analyse (Sherry and McGrath, 1989: 150).



Plate 4.3: The Shamoji House.



Plate 4.4: Joyful Miyajima.

written on its handle. According to Mrs. Miyazato, the owner, this shamoji is aimed at people who are conscious about using a special shamoji to scoop rice to offer to the ancestors at the Buddhist house altar. Actually these scoops are not selling well, but she claims that the philosophy of the shop is to also display things that do not sell, because this is a kind of service to their customers. Moreover, every morning the assistants put on a pair of white gloves and go over all the products with their hands to clean the dust off them.

Products from the Shamoji House are wrapped in a light brown paper bag with diagonal dark brown stripes running across it. The text 'Shamoji House', written in Chinese characters, is repeated in several places on the wrapping. In most other shops I visited - except for some specialised craft shops - the wrapping paper had no such distinctive design. Moreover, in the Shamoji House a small card with a rather elaborated version of the shamoji myth of origin, discussed in Chapter 1, and information about traditional Miyajima woodcraft is added. On the back of this card the owner of the shop wrote:

Our registered trademark 'Shamoji House' adds quality to shamoji, the speciality from Miyajima, spoons and other items. Please, use our products for a long time in a loving way.

Some products in the Shamoji House carry an additional tag on which the trademark 'Shamoji House' is written (see chapter 2). The branding of products is a much-discussed marketing strategy that aims to link the product with the store and with quality (Moeran, 1998:153).

I will end my discussion about the creation of a certain atmosphere in the souvenir shops by looking at a particular marketing technique common on the island. Many souvenir shops display shamoji signed by celebrities. These shamoji are not for sale but they serve as a kind of advertisement to draw the customers' attention and entices them to buy shamoji. We have seen how most tourist places in Japan attempt to increase their reputation through association with famous people (see Chapter 3). Again, this practice is most evident in the Shamoji House where two niches are turned into shamoji sanctuaries. In the first alcove several shamoji in various sizes with the signature of famous celebrities are placed together around a framed picture of the owner and her family next to two famous TV celebrities who visited the island in 1996 (Plate 4.5).

In a second niche three giant shamoji filled with signatures are arranged around a few pictures of baseball players. The members of the favourite baseball team of the shopkeeper's husband

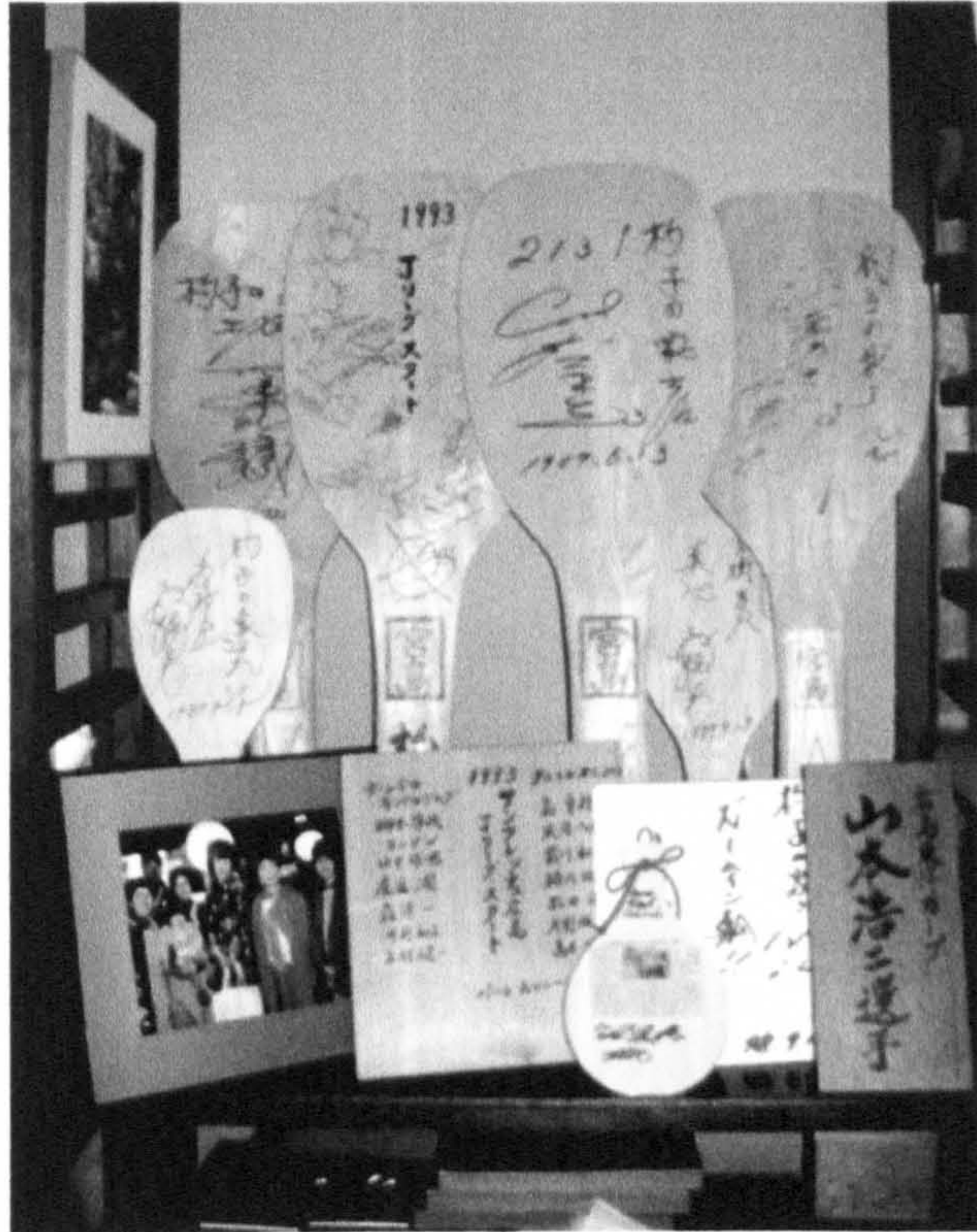


Plate 4.5: Shamoji signed by celebrities placed in an alcove in the Shamoji House.

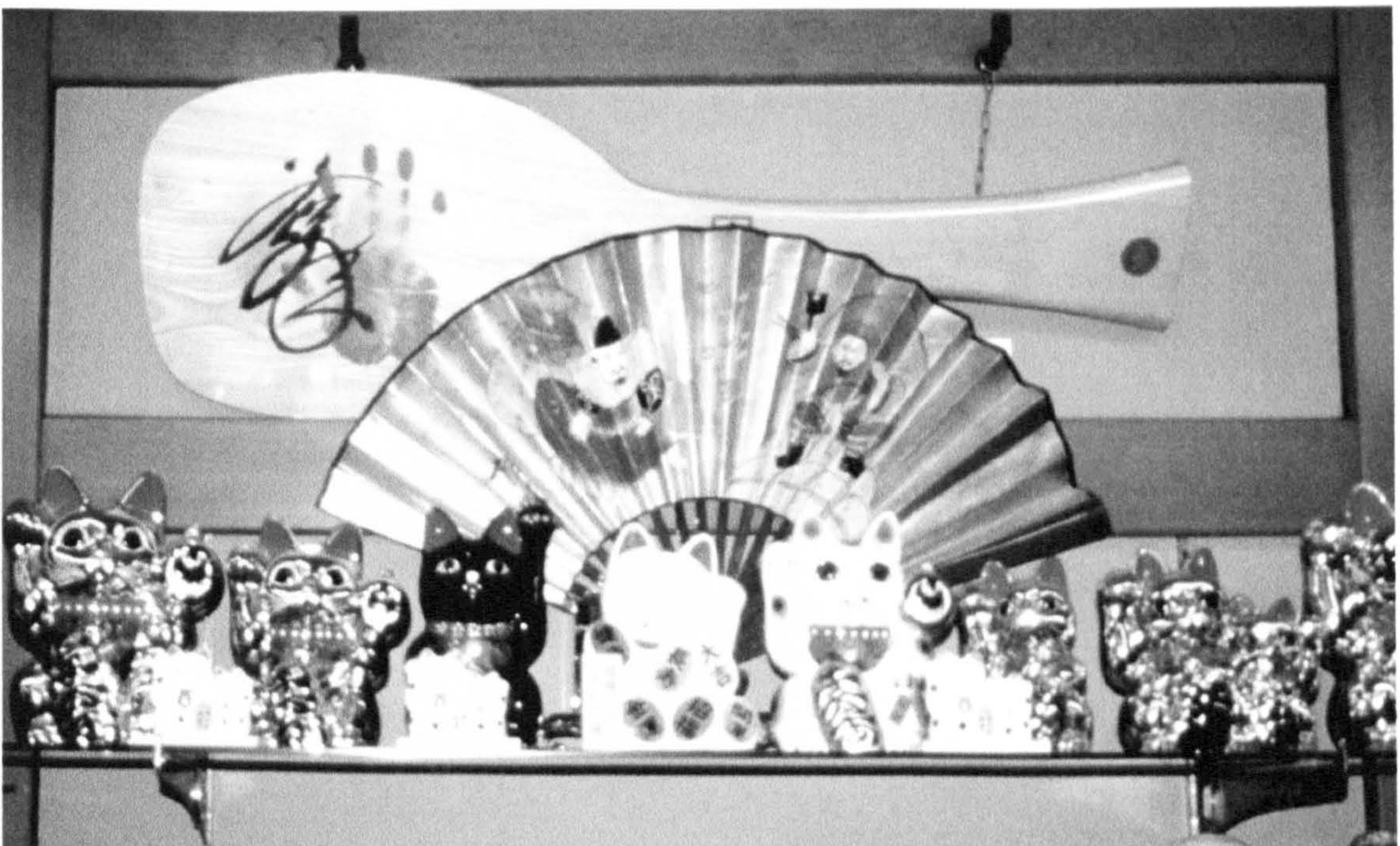


Plate 4.6: A shamoji with the handprint and signature of a famous Sumo wrestler hangs in Joyful Miyajima.

placed their signatures on these shamoji after winning a competition. On one shamoji 'victory in Central League 1996' (1996 sentoraru riigu yūshō) is written in black ink. A pillar in the middle of the same shop is decorated with five shamoji that have the name and signature of famous people written on them. These are memories of the visits of a famous actor, three celebrities who feature on a TV travel programme and a well-known TV-cook.

Against the wall in Joyful Miyajima hangs a big shamoji with a hand printed in red ink and a signature written across it in black ink (Plate 4.6). The shopkeeper explained that this is a shamoji signed by a Sumo wrestler when he visited the island. In a souvenir shop close to the Museum of History and Folklore, a lone shamoji with a signature is placed in the shopping window. Katsura Kokinji, a member of the House of Councillors and, according to the shop owner, 'a really good-looking fellow', signed the shamoji for her as a commemoration of his visit to Miyajima in October 1972. In a restaurant in the shopping arcade a dozen medium-sized shamoji and two *shikishi* with signatures of famous people are displayed in a niche.

Here, I will briefly return to my discussion about permanent material signs left behind by historical figures in the Miyajima landscape (see Chapter 3). In souvenir shops on the island, likewise, media and sports personalities have left their trace in the form of signatures or hand prints, as in the case of the Sumo wrestler mentioned above, printed on shamoji. In Europe and north America similar examples of personalities who leave their signature, but also hand prints or footprints behind in public spaces can be found. At the entrance to the Planet Hollywood restaurant in downtown Toronto, for example, celebrities who visited, such as Bruce Willis and Madonna, have imprinted both hands in a wall.¹¹ The hand print and footprint, and by extension also the signature, is a referent for the person.¹² On Miyajima, shamoji invested with the personality of famous people are employed to personalise retail spaces.

The association of celebrities with objects has been successfully explored in advertising. The practice of endorsement is defined as 'the promotion of the company's product by means of the

¹¹ A better known example of this practice is of course the Walk of Fame in Hollywood, where stars leave their handprints (and sometimes footprints) in the pavement. It is common for passers-by to place their own hands or feet in these prints left behind by celebrities.

¹² Within the Asian context an analogy with the footprint of the Buddha is apparent. Eckel calls it 'a sign of an absence'. It is 'an empty centre where a person could appropriate the Buddha's power' (Eckel, 1992: 49). At some temples such as the Daishoin on Miyajima, people will remove their shoes and place their feet in the footprint of the Buddha to make a prayer.

recommendation of an individual who is sufficiently well known and respected that he can influence the purchasing pattern of sections of the consumer public' (Bagehot and Nuttall, 1990: 129). In short, objects are linked with certain celebrities in order to invest them with their personality or human characteristics.¹³ Shamoji are linked to a diversity of people that have visited the island. These are sports personalities, such as Sumo wrestlers or baseball players, but also actors, major historical figures, local quiz presenters, artists, musicians and so on. The only criterion that seems to link this diversity of people together is their fame.

Television, newspapers and other media play an important role in the construction of fame (Chapter 3) in Japan. Any visitor to the island who has appeared in the media can be commemorated on shamoji in the souvenir stores.¹⁴ Media fame is short-lived in Japan and there is a fast turnover of people with a claim to fame. There is a point here to be made about the objectification of the self and fame. By having one's name and picture printed in the newspaper, the self is extended and objectified and thereby becomes more accessible as the object of people's curiosity. On Miyajima, these objectifications are literally attached to shamoji and turned into tools to entrap customers in commercial exchange relations (Gell, 1998).

Returning to the Shamoji House, the success of this souvenir shop is based on creating a feeling of distinctiveness from the other shops in the arcade. Through its strong visual appeal as a speciality shop the owner hopes to lure hurried tourists inside. Daniel Miller has studied the effect of different forms of visual display on shoppers in Trinidad. He argues that the intentions and strategies of the retailers do not match the expectations of the consumers. Other aspects such as music, for example, are more important than visual display in creating a certain ambience. Miller concludes that shoppers are most concerned with fellow shoppers and shopping should be seen as a 'form of sociability' (Miller, 1997: 39). Glennie and Thrift (1996), similarly, stress the social nature of shopping. In their view, consumption patterns are historically linked with sociability. Shopping in pairs or groups was common in the early-modern shops in Britain. The street used to be a space between the public and the domestic where skills of presentation, interpretation and improvisation were important (Glennie and Thrift, 1996: 227).

¹³ The Japanese talent system is similar to the celebrity system which developed in the US during the 1910's after the introduction of motion pictures as 'a system of knowledge predicated on the circulation of a name' (Moeran, 1996: 162).

¹⁴ The presence of an anthropologist studying the community can also be employed to add to the island's reputation. During my fieldwork articles related to my whereabouts on the island appeared in two newspapers and a magazine. The media attention transformed me into a kind of local celebrity.

Shoppers on Miyajima are tourists who travel in small informal or larger guided groups. The consumption of souvenirs in the shops is not only about commodity exchange, but it is a social activity enjoyed with fellow travellers. Local retailers cannot build a reputation based on customer loyalty. They are pretty much at the mercy of hurried shoppers who are often enjoying a once in a lifetime visit. Visual distinctiveness and the creation of a certain atmosphere through display is crucial for a shop to attract adult tourists travelling in pairs or small informal groups, but also, as we shall see in Chapter 5, small groups of schoolchildren. I do not want to suggest that Japanese consumers are passive vulnerable victims, submitting to the power of the advertiser, the shopkeeper and so on. On the contrary, they are subjects who are knowledgeable about the outlook of different types of shops and the messages they convey. They interpret and re-appropriate meanings and can challenge the purpose of the retailers. Goss, for example, has demonstrated how consumers actively reappropriate space in a shopping mall (Goss, 1993: 162). The following investigation of tourist-consumers shows that, contrary to Miller's findings in Trinidad (1998), on Miyajima visual display strategies do not miss their desired effect.

5. Sales women with a Personal Touch

Japanese tourists have certain expectations about different types of shops. Larke has pointed out that:

Japanese consumers know their stores well and hold different expectations for different store types. For example, consumers expect low prices at large and small supermarkets and superstores, but not at speciality stores which are noted for product quality. Consumers require product assortment from department stores, and familiarity and ease of use from independent retailers (Larke, 1994: 45).

Those tourists who enter the Shamoji House, which promotes itself as a speciality store, expect it to sell high quality goods and offer a professional service in an atmospheric setting. Visual distinctiveness is a major strategy to attract customers.

However, some tourists are guided in their choice for the Shamoji House either by other people or through the media. Mrs Hiroshige, a housewife in her fifties from Kobe, explained that she preferred to buy her souvenirs in the Shamoji House because it was mentioned in her guidebook. Moreover, those travelling in organised package tours seem to be far less concerned with the visual appeal of souvenir shops. In return for a commission guides lead these tourists to particular shops where they are given time to make their purchases. Package tourists frequently have lunch together in a hall in the back or on the second floor of an establishment which doubles as a

souvenir shop on the ground level. Large organised groups do not frequent the Shamoji House, but regularly private guides do introduce tourists to the shop.

Once tourists have entered a certain shop there is a huge choice of shamoji. This gives the shopper great freedom, but I noted that the majority of tourists experience quite some difficulty in discriminating between the variety of shamoji on offer. As a consequence, they rely on the shopkeeper for further information about the goods on sale. A good example of the main stream Japanese customer on Miyajima are Mr and Mrs Nakagawa, a couple in their forties from Chiba Prefecture, who were visiting Miyajima for the first time. Mrs. Nakagawa told me that she loves to watch travel programmes. A programme about Miyajima on TV gave her the incentive to visit. They visited the Itsukushima Shrine, had lunch in a local restaurant and were on their way back to the ferry. The Nakagawas told me that they chose to enter the Shamoji house because of:

the atmosphere of this shop, well, it feels like a speciality shop. We thought we might find something of good quality here.

They walked a few times around the racks with shamoji while admiring the range of items on sale before they turned to assistant 1 for advice. She guided them to the mulberry and zelkova shamoji and started to promote the qualities of mulberry wood. But when she noticed that they showed more interest in zelkova wood she returned to the counter to fetch an old damaged zelkova shamoji. She explained that this shamoji belonged to a woman who used it for years until the head had broken. She looked for the same shamoji everywhere but finally she had returned to the Shamoji House to buy a new zelkova scoop. The couple decided to buy a luxurious lacquered zelkova shamoji displayed in a decorated box for 1800 yen (9 pounds) that they planned to use at home.

In Japan, traditionally, goods were not displayed in shops but retailers would take their merchandise to customers in order to persuade them to place orders (Moeran, 1998: 146). Today, the expertise of the salesperson is still trusted and appreciated. My Miyajima data shows that the salesperson does play a powerful negotiating role in the exchange of goods. In different souvenir shops on Miyajima, I observed, time and time again, customers asking the salesperson for professional advice. Assistant 1 in the Shamoji House explains how she had to study hard in

order to live up to the expectations of her customers:

Q: There are lots of people who ask you for advice, aren't there?

A: Well, yes, I am very thankful for that. If people honour us with a visit we must explain things to them. We aim to make everything clear to them. I am only a part-time worker but I have been studying because indeed we must be able to inform our customers.

What is considered appropriate behaviour for shop assistants may vary considerably in different cultural contexts. Sherry and McGrath have stressed the importance of the personnel's interactive behaviour with the customers in gift stores in America. The sales people are expected to 'listen to and affirm the customer, and to provide background information about an object or an artisan' (Sherry & McGrath, 1989: 157). Miller has demonstrated how most British shoppers criticise what they call the aggressive behaviour of staff in American retail outlets. This is, contrasted with the discrete, helpful British approach that is seen as more natural. However, until fairly recently, services in Britain were actually also highly intrusive (Miller et al., 1998b: 119-122). Anyone who enters a shop in Japan is greeted with a loud, high-pitched '*irasshaimase*' from the sales people. It means something like 'Welcome! Come on in!' or 'May I help you? What can I do for you?'. At first the continuous repetition of this greeting might seem rather intrusive for the non-Japanese shopper, but most Japanese customers probably consider this part of the shopping experience.

The majority of sales people on Miyajima are housewives aged between thirty-five and seventy.¹⁵ Most of these women are outsiders who married into a family living on Miyajima. Some of their husbands might produce crafts sold in the shop, but in recent years most men work outside the home, either in the tourist industry on Miyajima or in other jobs in nearby cities. It is important to note here that most shopkeepers do not receive any payment, they work in the family business frequently located in front of their own house. Philip Crang (1997) has studied the construction of hospitable spaces within tourism. He shows that the notion of hospitality or friendly services is often linked with an understanding of domesticity and private spaces. He gives the example of female flight attendants whose portrayals of femininity are necessary to combine 'the commercialised provision of air travel and mobility with notions of the private, non-commercialised welcoming of guests into a home' (Crang, 1997: 144). Interestingly enough, many shopkeepers on Miyajima wear an apron, the symbol of Japanese housewifery, while working in their shop.¹⁶

¹⁵ Only two of the shopkeepers I talked to were male. Both were retired craftsmen in their late seventies.

¹⁶ The two employees in the Shamoji House frequently wear an indigo livery coat (*happi*) with a vermilion Miyajima crest on the back. This original shop-uniform adds further to the distinctiveness of

shop.¹⁶ This is quite different from the image evoked by the elegantly dressed shopkeepers in the Israeli craft shop discussed by Shenhav-Keller (Shenhav-Keller, 1995 147).

Customers in souvenir shops on Miyajima are also mainly women (see Chapter 5). In Japan consumption is highly gendered. For Japanese women who can expect little personal fulfilment in public life, consumption and the appropriation of material culture offers a space for creativity (Skov and Moeran, 1995: 106). Asked about male customers assistant 1 in the Shamoji House replied:

Well, in the past few years men have also began to buy our products. Japanese men have always felt a bit embarrassed to buy these kinds of things. It has to do with the segregation of the sexes. Men, for example, were not allowed to enter the kitchen. But today these things no longer exist. There are lots of people who live alone. Well, these shamoji are also perfect as a present for their wives. Because mulberry and zelkova are not sold outside Miyajima they can say [to their wives]: 'See, there they sold these kinds of high quality shamoji'.

While I was working in the Shamoji House a group of five men entered the shop one. They came straight up to the counter to ask the owner for advice because they wanted to buy shamoji for their wives. They were colleagues on a company outing. The men had lunch in the restaurant next door and were referred to the Shamoji House for nice souvenirs by some of the waitresses. Assistant 2 gave her usual comments in front of the rack with shamoji. She especially stresses the qualities of the mulberry shamoji saying:

My favourite shamoji is the mulberry wood shamoji. Mulberry wood is very healthy. I have been using a shamoji made out of mulberry wood for more than twenty years now.

Her recommendations resulted in two men buying a mulberry and one a cherry tree wood shamoji.

In their comparative study of gift stores in the US, Sherry and McGrath (1989) have, similarly, demonstrated that the store is a feminine domain. They link the feminine atmosphere in the shop with the principal role of women in gift exchange. It is suggested that a 'gendered mediation between gifts exchanged and the market' takes place in the gift store (Sherry and McGrath, 1989: 162). Similarly, sales people and customers in souvenir shops on Miyajima are mostly female. In

¹⁶ The two employees in the Shamoji House frequently wear an indigo livery coat (*happi*) with a vermilion Miyajima crest on the back. This original shop-uniform adds further to the distinctiveness of the shop.

the Chapter 5 I will analyse this interaction between female sales people and particular types of visitors in detail. Here I want to stress that the personal involvement of female sales people is one way to personalises the exchange. The following comments of the owner of the Shamoji House highlight this:

I personally try all the different types of shamoji sold in the shop because then I can give my customers better advice about the characteristics of each. You know, in this shop there is not one shamoji displayed that I dislike.

6. Discussion: Retailing and Personalising Souvenirs

I began this chapter with a discussion about the prevailing depiction of souvenirs in the Western and Japanese literature about tourism. In short, on the one hand, objects purchased by tourists from Europe and Northern America have been interpreted as repositories of personal memories or as proof of trips made (Littrell et al., 1993; Shenhav-Keller, 1995). One of the major shortcomings of this body of literature is that the focus is on international travel and cross-cultural exchange between tourists from industrialised societies and local 'traditional' producers. The influence of tourism on local modes of production has been adequately explored, but the actual purchase of souvenirs in shops and its journey into the home have not been properly dealt with. This last critique also applies to Japanese literature about souvenirs which has concentrated on the religious roots of domestic travel. Souvenirs Japanese tourists bring home from domestic, but also international travel, are generally defined as gifts for those left behind (Nitta, 1992; Kanzaki, 1997). In this case, souvenirs are reduced to their role in the extended gift economy and are linked with stereotypical ideas about groupism and harmony.

My study based on data collected inside souvenir shops on Miyajima Island has questioned this supposedly culturally different perception of the souvenir. An important point, which emerged from my data, is that shopping for souvenirs is a more diverse and complex activity than the studies above propose. The kind of souvenirs tourists may take home depends on the contexts of travel. For example, it may depend on whether one travels in formal organised group with a tight schedule or whether one makes a short day-trip with relatives. The gender and age of those travelling also influences the selection of souvenirs. It makes a difference whether the tourist is a male employee travelling with company colleagues or a retired couple celebrating their wedding anniversary. Whether one is dealing with a sixteen year old girl checking out the cool spots with a group of friends or a middle-aged housewife who joined her tea ceremony teacher on a trip organised to buy new tea utensils.

We have seen in Chapter 3 that sociality is a major aspect of travel and this is also apparent in the souvenir shops. The shop is a meeting place where tourists handle, discuss, judge and select a souvenir with their travel companions as well as with the salesperson. I have conducted a material culture analysis of two typical souvenir shops located in the main shopping arcade on Miyajima in order to reveal the strategies locals employ to promote merchandise on sale. The first type of shop mainly offers cheap items linked with the tourist site. Secondly, I studied a speciality shop characterised by its high quality goods, wooden crafts in particular. My data again indicates a range of different motivations why tourists might decide to buy their souvenirs in a certain retail site. Some tourists may be guided into certain shops by commissioned tour guides, while others may follow the advice of a local friend, a travel book, or they might be lured into a certain shop by a distinctive display or an attractive facade. Some may carefully choose a speciality shop to do their purchase in, while others may postpone their shopping until they reach the ferry wharf or they buy a few things in a huge souvenir shopping centre across the bay next to the train station while they are waiting for the next train, or they may even wait until they are comfortably seated in the train.

Although the diversity of contexts in which souvenir shopping occurs cannot be stressed enough, this chapter has also attempted to reach some broader conclusion about the types of souvenirs that Japanese tourists buy. Many tourists I encountered felt inclined to bring home a number of gifts. Often these items were bought in return for gifts received from relatives, neighbours or friends who returned from a trip. These types of souvenirs play an important role in the creation and consolidation of social relationships back home. As such the Japanese category 'souvenir' resembles the classic anthropological concept of the gift. The act of giving is more significant than the content of the gift and these souvenirs are, generally, cheap mass-produced goods easily recognisable as linked with a particular place visited. In the case of Miyajima, popular items are famous products that have a long history of association with the island such as flat board-shaped shamoji or maple-leaf-shaped bean cakes. However, a myriad of other products with the name of the island or an image of the Itsukushima Shrine with the Grand Gate floating in the bay imprinted attached also fall within this category. Food is a particularly popular, cheap souvenir linked with a certain place. It has the additional advantage that back home it can be shared and consumed with others. However, gift-souvenirs are not all cheap impersonal items. The kinds of souvenirs people purchase as gifts also depend on the relationship between the giver and the receiver. As Bourdieu (1979) has demonstrated, gift exchange is not only about the realisation of reciprocity.

Gifting is not a disinterested obligatory act. On the contrary, participants engage in a 'confrontation of strategies'¹⁷ that can mark the particularity of the relationship or that may attempt to challenge or transform it (Bourdieu, 1979: 22-3).

Some of my informants went out of their way to find a special souvenir for intimate friends and relatives. Souvenirs bought to give to a collector also fall in this category (Chapter 7). Items that cannot easily be found elsewhere in Japan, for example, local fresh products or home-made foods such as pickles sold in a local supermarket are particularly sought after. In this case ordinary items of material culture produced and consumed on a daily base by local people are considered more appropriate gifts than luxuriously wrapped famous products that are available nation-wide. By way of comparison, in the case of the type of cheap standard gifts bought in large quantities discussed above, it does not seem to matter whether these goods are actually purchased at the spot visited or elsewhere.

In recent years Japanese tourists increasingly buy souvenirs for their own consumption. This shows that the Japanese notion of the souvenir cannot be reduced to a study of gifts and reciprocity. Items linked with personal experiences and memories are popular among young women between 18 and 35 years old. These souvenirs are commonly more expensive crafted objects that are expressive of the buyer's status or taste. On Miyajima, shamoji made of high quality, rare woods and gigantic shamoji with engraved images fall in this category. However, children and teenagers purchase cheap trinkets for themselves. In any case, any souvenir, whether bought for oneself or as a gift, may objectify a variety of personal and social values. My study of commercial exchanges in souvenir shops has demonstrated that the commercial arena is not necessarily seen as opposed to the social or personal spheres of life. Inside the souvenir shops the act of buying a souvenir is personalised or turned into a social relationship. Those shops on the island that have created a distinctive atmosphere and offer a more personalised service have been most successful. Commercial enterprises that recognise the need for constructing a non-commercial context of exchange and consumption are able to combine the needs of customers with their own interests.

¹⁷Gell (1992b) supports Bourdieu's claim but he questions the argument that the participants are unaware of the strategic truths of their exchanges. Though a discussion of other ethnographic examples, such as Kula exchanges, he comes to the conclusion that strategies to delay exchanges are self-conscious calculated tactics linked to the rationale of local politics (Gell, 1992b: 275-83).

Carrier (1990) has discussed the following three different strategies employed to personalise objects depicted in mail order catalogues in the US. Firstly, text that refers to the individual producers of the product is added. Often a detailed history of the objects for sale further identifies objects with specific people in specific times and places. Secondly, objects are linked with individuals working for the company. Thirdly, the objects are shown as gifts in the world of users (Carrier, 1990: 696-701). Similar processes of personification can also be found in souvenir shops on Miyajima. Text is employed to outline the history of the shamoji linking it with the monk Seishin and his divine adviser, the Buddhist deity Benzaiten. As we have seen in Chapter 1 the personalised power of the Goddess Benzaiten is said to materialise in the Miyajima landscape, her statue, the shrine and Miyajima shamoji. More recently, shamoji have been invested with the personality of famous people. This hints at continuity between traditional processes of embodiment of the power of the Deity and the more modern forms of embodiment of power of celebrities. The symbolic connection between the souvenir, the place visited and the nature of the visit will be returned to in the conclusion.

Within the thesis as a whole, this chapter shows that the souvenir shop is a transitional space located between the producers on the island and the visiting consumers. Shamoji displayed inside shops, for instance, point backward to the island and the power of the Deity Benzaiten but they also point forward to the home, women and domesticity. Female sales people build on their personal experiences as housewives to link souvenirs with the home. Through their personalised interactions with customers these women are often successful in persuading people to buy a certain product. In the next chapter, I will focus on how female sales people promote shamoji in their shops. I am especially interested in the diversity of narratives linked with the domestic arena that they draw upon. Chapter 7 will question these discourses through an analysis of how shamoji are actually consumed in the home.

Chapter 5 Vocalising Souvenirs, Shamoji Discourses

Narratives about functionality, aesthetics, the environment and luck

1. Introduction: Shop talk, Knowledge and Taste

The souvenir shop is a contemporary site of consumption where local entrepreneurs interact with tourist-consumers. Whereas the previous chapter mainly looked at the material culture and the atmosphere of souvenir shops, this chapter will consider discourses concerning souvenirs that circulate in the shops. Joifuru Miyajima and the Shamoji House, the two souvenir shops introduced in Chapter 4, will also be the focus of this chapter. In recent years, there has been a shift towards more personal souvenirs and those souvenir shops that offer high quality tasteful shamoji in a personal atmosphere have been most successful. I have demonstrated that tourists generally select a certain shop where they want to make their purchase. Once inside they expect the salesperson to assist them in making a choice. This chapter will focus on the rhetoric about shamoji, constructed by salespersons and indirectly by wholesale companies, that aim to make a direct appeal to the diversity of tourists that enter souvenir shops on Miyajima.

Tim Edensor's analysis of narratives circulating at the Taj Mahal (Edensor, 1998) has shown that the tourist industry in India aims to produce an official narrative articulated by guide books, pamphlets, explanatory boards, tourist guides and so forth and so on. However, because the production of stories is an ongoing ever-changing process, a range of discursive, smaller accounts will circulate at any time as well (Edensor, 1998: 69-71). He points out how locals working and living nearby use their expertise about the site to provide detailed narratives about goods or services on sale. He gives the example of an owner of a craft shop who does extensive research and has written about marble work at the Taj and who uses his expertise to give voice to the products in his shop (Edensor, 1998: 100). The narratives of experts are also a precious resource to attract tourists in a coastal community of craftsmen that specialise in the production of decoys and carvings of waterfowl and fish in Southern New Jersey in the US (Chiarappa, 1997). These craftsmen try to link their produce with regional and personal genealogies through a combination of visual representation - the material culture of the shop and its contents and their own performance of actually producing crafts nearby - and narration. In the two cases above the narrators are experts who provide detailed stories based on knowledge acquired either through personal study or through their engagement in the actual manufacture process. In most souvenir

shops on Miyajima, on the other hand, the tourist site and the merchandise on sale, in this case shamoji, are woven together by women in affective stories linked with everyday life experiences.¹

It was common for saleswomen in all the shops studied to recommend a certain shamoji based on their own experience in their kitchens at home. Everyday bodily domestic practices are crucial in the creation of knowledge about shamoji in the public sphere. The well-developed urban networks of women consumer groups in Japan provide us with a contemporary example of the mediation of female knowledge concerning certain goods. Mrs. Suzuki, an upper-class housewife in her late forties living in Tokyo is actively involved in consumer groups. She works part-time for a nation-wide telephone consumer service. At home she tries out a range of new home products such as containers to store rice or plastic bags to prevent garbage from getting stuck in the drainage. Her informative articles about the pros and cons of these mundane items of material culture appear in a woman's magazine focussing on practical tasks in the home. Mrs. Suzuki regularly meets with other women in the region to discuss their findings about products they have tested. These results also find their way to the manufacturers. In 1993, for example, Mrs. Suzuki published an article based on data collected through the consumer network about the usage of various shamoji. Complaints concerning the storage of shamoji influenced a leading manufacturer of rice cookers to produce a special shamoji stand that can be attached to the rice cooker (Suzuki, 1993).

Returning to the female sales people on Miyajima, it is important to stress that the narrative about the functionality of shamoji directed at housewives is just one among many. Salespeople will promote different products and adopt different narrative strategies according to the audience concerned. The ability to shift one's style of selling is crucial in making a product attractive to vaguely interested tourists. We find a more extreme case of this practice in Tel-Aviv where Palestinian male shopkeepers 'shift language, religion, politics and even their national identity' to suit the taste of potential customers (Bowman, 1996:90). My analysis of the whole range of discourses about shamoji constructed in the shops will elucidate vital clues about distinctive tastes among various tourist-consumers on Miyajima. Through consumption activities, in this case the purchase of shamoji as souvenirs, Japanese tourists create subtle differentiations. In Clammer's view, Japanese class-consciousness is principally constructed around consumption which is 'seen as a process, a continuous activity of self-construction, of relationship maintenance

¹An exception are those shops that specialise in expensive crafts where the craftsman himself is always nearby to give explanations.

and symbolic competition' (Clammer, 1997: 101). His concept of class as practice is similar to Miller's idea that class differentiation is no longer based on occupations but 'elements of consumption such as shopping increase in importance as central instruments within a continual process of class construction' (Miller, 1998b: 137). Consumer practices related to shamoji differ greatly according to gender and age. As such my study of consumption in souvenir shops on Miyajima also challenges stereotypical images of Japan as a homogeneous society.

In Chapter 3 we have seen that travel in small informal groups of friends or relatives is on the increase in Japan. Sociability plays an important role in the shopping experience of most visitors on Miyajima. It is common practice for small groups of tourists enter a shop, pick-up and handle some of the products for inspection, make comments to their friends, ask the shopkeeper questions, hang around a bit, but eventually customers may leave without making a purchase. Clammer has commented on a similar phenomenon whereby shoppers in Tokyo expect to be able to browse as much as they want to without any obligation to buy. He interprets this as a form of sociability (Clammer, 1997: 74). The local shopping street might not quite be a match for the glamorous urban shopping arcades in downtown Tokyo, but shopping on Miyajima with friends or family members can be as big an adventure in that one may acquire unexpected things and knowledge and basically it is a fun thing to do.

In their account of gift stores in the US, Sherry and McGrath argue that the handling of products is encouraged and expected because it is seen as being part of the gift store experience (Sherry and McGrath, 1989: 150). Trying and testing products in the shop forms a significant aspect of the process of choosing personal tools or utensils for everyday use around the world. This is, especially, the case for expensive purchases such as cameras or laptops, but the same goes for such mundane objects as a pair of gloves or a pen. An important part of the practice of examining products is about performance. In shops on Miyajima one can speak of an over-choice of most products on sale and customers often investigate the material qualities and texture of goods with the five senses. Shamoji are touched, handled, looked at in detail and smell and tastes of woods are discussed at length. It is difficult to tell if customers know what they are looking for or if they are acting as if they know. Shopping for souvenirs with friends or relatives involves a complex set of skills and moralities and it may generate a rivalry 'in knowing trends, achieving bargains, having taste' (Miller, 1997: 41).

I will continue looking at the main discourses surrounding shamoji in souvenir shops. First, I will focus on a set of narratives that focus on the practical qualities of cheap shamoji employed in cooking food or serving rice. The second rhetoric is concerned with the health-related properties of more exclusive shamoji made of rare woods.

2. Japanese Housewifery, Food and Kitchen Utensils

Shamoji are kitchen utensils employed to scoop cooked rice from the rice cooker and into individual rice bowls. One set of discourses about shamoji circulating in the souvenir shops builds on their function as mundane kitchen utensils. The shamoji promoted in this way are made of inexpensive materials, for example, the young wood of cherry and cedar trees, but also bamboo and plastic. It is common in souvenir shops on Miyajima to display these cheap shamoji together with a range of other scoop-like kitchen utensils such as spatula, ladles, spaghetti scoops and so on. Shop clerks frequently refer to the scoop-like kitchen utensils as a particular type of shamoji.

In Kojiya, I was told that '*kukkingu shamoji*' (cooking shamoji) with a long handle sell especially well these days.² On page 2 of the Miyachu shamoji wholesale company's product catalogue for 1999 these scoop-like kitchen utensils are called shamoji 'for the preparation of food' (*o-ryōriyō*). We are shown a picture of a frying pan filled with food and two spatula with the text: 'The kitchen companion with a difference'³: a smart and easy-to-use cooking shamoji that is very convenient for mixing and stirring food.' On page 9 in the same catalogue a range of kitchen utensils made from cherry tree are portrayed and called the 'Cherry Tree Series'. These are produced by Mr. Fujii, the shamoji maker who specialises in products made of cherry tree wood (see Chapter 2). This range of kitchen utensils includes nine differently shaped spatulas, for example, one with rounded head, another one with hole in the middle of the head, a spaghetti and a Japanese noodle server, a Japanese pancake scraper and so forth.

Outside, in front of the Joifuru Miyajima shop, stands a row of low tables on which a range of cheap shamoji and kitchen utensils based on the shamoji-shape such as spatulas, ladles and

²Some shop clerks claimed that the decrease in rice consumption in Japan in general led to a drop in shamoji sales. In urban areas, for example, it has become common to eat rice only once a day. As a result, many shops began to sell other kitchen utensils as well.

³The text plays on a pun around the word *hanrō*. It can mean companion but also spouse. Thus the shamoji is called 'the spouse with a difference' in reference to the husband who is never at home.

skimmers are placed. Mrs. Okamoto, the shopkeeper, claims that these kinds of kitchen utensils are very popular.

Q: Who buys them?

A: Well, as you might have guessed, housewives really like these kinds of things. For example this kind of *temaki* set [bamboo scoop and mat to make sushi rolls with] or these spatulas to use in the frying pan [points at a set of bamboo shamoji and spatula].

Indeed, I observed that the display tables outside this shop mainly drew the attention of middle-aged women travelling in small groups. One such example is a group of seven women, all housewives aged between forty and sixty-five, from Kyoto. They were members of a karaoke class on a 'one-night-two-days' trip together with their teacher. While the group passed through the shopping arcade a bamboo spatula with a hole in its head, priced 350 yen (1.80 pounds), caught one of the women's attention. As she picked up the item for inspection, the shopkeeper swiftly moved forward while explaining how she used these convenient spatula herself for frying things at home. The other women soon joined in expressing various opinions about other spatulas available on the market. Some said they were actually using wooden shamoji to stir things with in the frying pan, but others claimed that those were not very hygienic. Finally, everyone agreed that bamboo was the kind of material very close to the heart of the Japanese. When one woman decided to buy the bamboo spatula in question the whole group followed suit. Each woman of the group bought approximately seven spatulas. As they explained, one for themselves and the other as gifts for friends and relatives. In less than five minutes the shopkeeper sold more than fifty identical spatulas.

The way shamoji, in the case study above, are picked up, handled, touched and talked about before making a purchase can be seen as part of the performance of showing that one is a knowledgeable housewife concerned with the well-being of one's family. As I have pointed out several times before, since the end of the nineteenth century the gendered division between home and work has been idealised in Japan. Closely related to this discourse is the construct of the full-time housewife, whose primary duties are managing the home, mothering, feeding and caring. Interestingly enough two, quite recent, studies about Japanese urban housewives argue that housewifery is still the primary role expected from Japanese women (Imamura, 1987:18; Leblanc, 1999: 31-32). It is true that a large group of Japanese women, especially those between thirty-five and sixty-five years old, positively identify with the Japanese notion of the full-time housewife. However, the problem is that the ideology of the housewife has led to the continuous portrayal of all Japanese women, by the government, the media, academics, etc., as passive

consumers linked with the family and the domestic arena. I agree with Skov and Moeran that labelling women as housewives - 'which has all too often been reproduced in Japanese Studies, shows a curious disregard for the fact that paid labour is an increasingly important part of married women's lives' (Skov and Moeran, 1995: 26). Later in this Chapter I will look at the growing segment of Japanese women who have their own spending power and who actively create themselves through personal consumption activities.

In his ethnography of shopping in North London Daniel Miller found that the practice of shopping has nothing to do with the widespread discourse of individualised hedonism and materialism. On the contrary, it is through shopping that housewives, for example, express their care for loved ones (Miller, 1998). On Miyajima, similarly, middle-aged housewives purchase souvenirs that objectify their relationship with husbands, children and relatives. In a way the Miyajima shamoji can be interpreted as a housewife's ultimate souvenir because it is a functional item used to distribute food among family members in the home. In addition, shamoji are interesting because they have a long history of association in Japanese folklore with the powerful position of the female household head in agrarian families. In post-war Japan shamoji were further appropriated as the symbol of the Japanese Association of Housewives (see Chapter 7). In a way shamoji are the embodiment of how housewives create themselves through care for others while, at the same time, feeling empowered and in control. Another way of looking at this is that housewives who leave on a trip without their families buy a shamoji to express their commitment to their families. Allison has shown that for Japanese mothers and housewives recreation is often embedded in domestic activities. Enjoyment is not given as the main motivation for leisure, but commonly self-improvement or engaging in social activities with the children are cited (Allison, 1994: 124-5).

Returning to Miller, he claims that shopping as provisioning is experienced as saving money while leisure shopping, for example, on holidays is characterised by extravagant spending because one feels free from obligations (Miller, 1998: 62). My Japanese case study challenges this view because it shows that Japanese housewives' shopping strategies while on holiday continue to be guided by thriftiness. The ideal Japanese housewife is cherished for her efficient management of the family budget and shopping strategies of small parties of travelling housewives are based on thriftiness. Finding the best deals and being able to save money is considered an expression of one's skills and knowledge as a housewife. In short, price is a major concern for this group of consumers on Miyajima. Prices of 'shamoji for daily use' vary according to the shape, the size and the material used. Flat board-shaped shamoji are rare these days, but one shop had stacked

a number of them in a basket outside with the text: 'any of these for 100 yen' (50 pence). Most kitchen utensils cost between 300 and 500 yen (1.50 and 2.50 pounds). The cheapest 'high quality' shamoji made of bamboo costs 300 yen (1.5 pounds) while at the other end of the scale lacquered mulberry shamoji are on offer for up to 2500 yen (12 pounds). This particular group of shoppers belongs also to the category of tourists who are most likely to bring home a large amount of cheap gifts to create or consolidate relationships between their family and others.

We have seen that in their communication with middle-aged housewives sales people draw on their own experiences in the kitchen to stress the qualities of certain scoops. The case study above illustrates that this kind of interaction between seller and buyer can easily take the form of a dialogue between housewives. This kind of rhetoric in the souvenir shops stresses the practical advantages of certain shamoji linking them with food preparation in the home. Firstly, formal characteristics, such as the smoothness of the curved handle and rounded head, are said to make serving and preparing food more convenient. Secondly, the materials used are supposed to influence the taste or the smell of the food. Whereas the first characteristics can be easily discussed by anyone engaged in food preparation, the second way to promote these shamoji is based on more specialised knowledge about qualities of certain woods used. Most customers rely completely on shopkeepers for this kind of information.

My inquiry into the discourse about the way certain woods may or may not influence the taste of the food revealed many contradictions. Depending on the shop or even each individual shopkeeper some characteristics, such as the smell of the wood, could help determine a good or a bad quality of shamoji. In the Hiroshige shop, for example, I was told that white cedar wood is the best for kitchen utensils because it smells nice. However, others stressed that shamoji should not smell at all. In the Hirokawa shop, for example, the female shopkeeper claimed: 'mulberry is the best since the old days, well, it doesn't have a smell.' In the Fujimoto shop I was told: 'I have cherry wood and maple, but the best is mulberry wood. I also sell [shamoji made of] cypress wood (*hinoki*) but unfortunately they smell a bit.' This ambiguity about the smell of the wood tunes in with a general vagueness concerning the qualities of different woods in the majority of shops on Miyajima.

The average shopkeeper has no specialised knowledge about the qualities of certain woods used. However, exceptions are the three shopkeepers in the Shamoji House. As we have seen in Chapter 4, the success of the Shamoji House is partly based on the commitment of the sales

people who conduct research about their products in their private time in order to supply their customers with additional information. The ambiguity concerning the qualities of different kinds of woods used for cheap shamoji that I witnessed in most shops is in sharp contrast with the promotion of the two more expensive 'high quality' shamoji made of mulberry and zelkova wood. In the latter case, customers are presented with an excess of information. On acquiring one of these shamoji in the Shamoji House, for example, additional written promotional materials about characteristics of both woods are added to the merchandise. The 'high quality' shamoji also have several stickers with information attached to their handle. These inform customers about the name of wood used, that these are 'high quality materials' (*kokyūzai*) or that they are 'hand-made' (*tezukuri*) shamoji. The mode of production of the 'high quality' shamoji made of other woods, on the contrary, is kept vague. Usually, the name of the wood is not specified, but a sticker reading 'special selection of wood' (*tokusen*) might be attached to the handle of these scoops. The use of labels and tags is also a popular practice in souvenir shops in Canada selling aboriginal crafts. In Blundell's view, this is because 'the presence of tags seems to add to the attractiveness of the object itself' (Blundell, 1994:265). However, she also demonstrates how authenticity tags can mislead the buyer. On Miyajima, similarly, 'high quality' shamoji made of rare woods are sold as hand-made products. However, these days only the last part of the production process is done manually (Chapter 2).

Wholesale companies⁴ play an important role in the construction of the wood-related rhetoric surrounding shamoji in the shops. Mr. Okazaki, a local historian, argues that shopkeepers do not:

have any kind of special knowledge about trees. These discourses were made up by distributors, wholesale middlemen. They ask makers to make certain kind of scoops and then they tell shopkeepers how to sell them (personal communication).

Mr. Okazaki traces the power position of these wholesalers, acting as middlemen between producer and consumer, back to Tokugawa Japan when monks and Shinto priests were probably the only ones with access to a nation-wide network of information. Although consumers were originally self-sufficient for most things, middlemen created demand by informing consumers on the availability of other products (Mr Okazaki, personal communication). Contemporary communication media have broken down this monopoly over the diffusion of information and this now means that the same information is available to all, producers and consumers, as well as the middlemen.

Consequently, the powerful role of wholesalers⁵ in the mediation of knowledge is diminishing rapidly. But on Miyajima, the biggest shamoji wholesale company in Japan, Miyachu, is still actively engaged in the construction of narratives. All the souvenir shops on the island sell Miyachû's merchandise. Moreover, as we have seen above, one of the two vice-presidents of the company owns the Shamoji House, while Joifuru Miyajima is the flagship store of Miyachû. Miyachû accumulates a multitude of information about shamoji (see Chapter 2). But interestingly enough, it is women who are key informants concerning the utilitarian aspects of the scoops. Mrs. Miyazato, the wife of the president of the Miyachu wholesale company, for example, claims that she first tries out every type of shamoji produced. She jokingly said:

Yes, it is a bit strange, don't you think, that men are producing women's things.

Discourses about wood circulating in the shops differ according to the scoops concerned. When people, often housewives, are interested in shamoji made of cheaper materials the pragmatic qualities of white wood, locally called *shiraki*⁶, are stressed.⁷ Below we will see that in the case of the expensive 'high quality' shamoji, on the other hand, the aesthetics of the wood are highlighted. Two practical qualities regularly feature in narratives about the whiteness of the wood. Firstly, the smell of white wood is said to influence the taste of the rice. Secondly, because white wood didn't colour the rice it was thought more appropriate. However, in general the benefits attributed to white wood in the shops are rather obscure.

Religious professionals on Miyajima seem to have more pronounced ideas about white wood. During discussions with Shinto priests on Miyajima a well-developed religious discourse about utensils made of bare white wood surfaced. The following story about the use of *shiraki* wood chopsticks to offer food to the deities told by Iida, an high-ranking Shinto priest at the

⁴During the Meiji period (1868-1908) the number of wholesalers close to tourist spots increased rapidly in Japan. They played a major role in introducing new products (Okazaki, 1991).

⁵In Japan a large number of small retailers depends on several layers of small wholesalers for the supply of their products. The complexities involved in these long distribution channels have been severely criticised in western business cycles because they create great difficulty for those who want to penetrate the Japanese market. Larke notes that at the moment the system is in a period of transition and the growth of power of retailers will eventually result in changing the system (Larke, 1994: 56-67).

⁶The definition of *shiraki* wood which applies to my discussion is 'a piece of wood from which the bark is removed, shaved and left bare without any coating' (Kôjien, 1992: 1220).

⁷I want to stress that although in the period 1996-7 the narrative about the whiteness of the cheap 'shamoji for everyday use' was common, in 1999 the whiteness of the wood was much less discussed with customers in the shop.

Itsukushima Shrine, illustrates this:

Normally, colour is not a big taboo, but on Miyajima, on the contrary, there existed the belief that chopsticks made of *shiraki* wood must be used. The chopsticks of the deities are made of white wood and therefore in the past we found it difficult to eat with chopsticks of this colour. In other shrines it is not customary to offer food with chopsticks, but at the Itsukushima Shrine we make chopsticks from a tall aromatic tree. Because we don't remove the skin of the tree these chopsticks are characterised by their simplicity. Therefore, inhabitants of Miyajima have been eating with coloured chopsticks since the Edo period.

Contrary to Mr. Iida's claim, the practice of offering chopsticks made of bare, white wood of sacred trees also exists at other Shinto shrines in Japan, for example at the Ise Shrine and the Izumo Shrine. According to Honda, the deities were supposed to use these chopsticks to eat the offerings and consequently their spirit resides in them (Honda, 1983:12). All shamoji sold at religious sites I visited in Japan were flat board-shaped *shiraki* shamoji.

Why is white wood made into an important category by shopkeepers when they address housewives? The narratives about the whiteness of wooden shamoji do not try to emulate discourses about craft and Japanese aesthetics. This rhetoric should rather be seen as an attempt to integrate religious discourses that associated whiteness with cleanliness and purity (Miyata, 1994:26-40). In the following quote, Mr. Umebayashi, Miyajima's mayor, stressed that white wood shamoji are hygienic kitchen tools instead of beautiful crafts

Well when you use these products [crafts made of mature wood] -how can I explain it - well, it is very pleasant. Over time, you will probably also be able to enjoy the colour. In case of the shamoji - how should I say- because it is a tool, from a hygienic point of view, white [wood] is the best.

The most plausible reason why *shiraki* wood is used for shamoji might be found at the production side. Shamoji makers value *shiraki* wood because of its softness that makes it ideal for the manufacturing of shamoji with machines. Atarashi Tadoru, a professional shamoji maker living in the Yoshino mountains in southern Nara Prefecture, who produces his scoops manually from mature chestnut wood, points out some of the disadvantages of using white wood for kitchen utensils. The softness of the wood makes manufacturing easier, but this kind of wood also absorbs water and rapidly starts to rot. In short, white wooden products are cheap and easy to produce, but not user-friendly because they need to be replaced regularly. This is, therefore, an ideal profit-making product for a tourist destination. The makers of this type of shamoji on Miyajima did not point out the negative qualities of white wood shamoji. However, makers of 'high

quality' shamoji as well as wood craftsmen involved in turnery and carving frequently compared the mature wood they used with white wood of lower quality. Craftsmen also revealed to me that bleaching the wood to make it white is a common practice.

In summary, on the island two contrasting discourses about wooden objects became attached to 'shamoji for everyday use'. Inexpensive shamoji sold as practical kitchen utensils are made of cheap, young wood and are white on purchase, whether coloured or not. While using these scoops in the kitchen they will gradually turn black and, therefore, need to be replaced regularly. The 'high quality' shamoji made of mature, dried mulberry and zelkova wood also becomes darker with use. However, in the latter case, frequent handling is said to improve the beauty of the pattern of the wood grain. The beauty of the wood grain pattern is seen as the main characteristic of the Miyajima woodcrafts and the following discussion of these crafts will reveal vital clues about the aesthetic discourse about shamoji on the island.

3. The Aesthetics of the Wood Grain Pattern

Today four wood-related professions are grouped together under the appellation 'Miyajima Woodcrafts' (*Miyajima zaiku*). Apart from shamoji makers, these are craftsmen producing wooden turnery (*rokurō zaiku*), hollowed out woodcrafts (*kurimono zaiku*) and woodcarvings (*Miyajimabori*). In 1982 each of the four crafts was designated as a 'Traditional Craft Product' (*dentōteki kōgeihin*) by the Ministry of Trade and Industry. An illustrated booklet titled: 'Miyajima's Traditional Crafts' informs us about their main characteristics:

Woods most commonly used for Miyajima woodcrafts are dark cedar, zelkova, mulberry, chestnut, cherry tree and cypress. The wood first has to dry naturally for several years, then it is carefully turned, carved or hollowed out by skilled craftsmen. The distinctive quality of the object depends on the pattern and the colour tone of the wood grain and the refined glaze and austerity of the wood.

In short, Miyajima woodcrafts are unlacquered objects made from mature high quality wood, cherished for their beautiful wood grain patterns. Shamoji production is mentioned as one of the Miyajima woodcrafts, but it is distinct from the other three wood-related industries. First, shamoji production on the island is considered to date back to the end of the eighteenth century, almost a century earlier than the other woodcrafts. Moreover, the origin of the Miyajima shamoji has been linked with local religious institutions and shamoji are still promoted as talismans invested with the spiritual power of the place. Second, the uniqueness of Miyajima is partly constructed through its association with the production, distribution and consumption of shamoji. Third and most relevant for my discussion of the other Miyajima woodcrafts, shamoji are mundane utensils linked with

food preparation and the kitchen, while the other woodcrafts were originally employed to make tea utensils. As a matter of fact, the discourse on the beauty of the wood grain as applied to Miyajima woodcrafts can be traced back to this relationship with tea.

On Miyajima, expensive hand-made woodcrafts made of high quality mature wood are on sale in specialised craft shops.⁸ Mr. Hirokawa is a professional wood engraver in his fifties. He can be observed carving elements of the Miyajima scenery in wooden trays in a corner of the Hirokawa family's souvenir shop, while his high quality crafts are on display in the back of the shop in a separate room. This craftsman calls the Miyajima woodcrafts *kijimon*, unlacquered products, and links their production with the custom of serving infused green tea (*sencha*) on Miyajima and in the wider Hiroshima region. He contrasts the unlacquered Miyajima woodcrafts used for the preparation of *sencha*⁹, with the lacquerware associated with powdered green tea, *matcha*. In contemporary Japan, *sencha*, is the green tea commonly drunk on a daily base while *matcha* is mainly associated with the formal, highly aestheticised preparation of tea in, what is these days commonly referred to as 'The Japanese Tea Ceremony' ¹⁰(Japan Illustrated Encyclopaedia, 1993: 360). However, a formal ceremony conducted with a particular set of tea utensils has developed around each type of green tea. Wooden *sencha* tea utensils are traditionally unlacquered (Nihon mingujiten, 1997: 301-3). Mr. Hirokawa claims that *sencha* instruments are unvarnished because it is expected that tea will be spilled on the wood.

In the case of *kijimon*, when tea flows over [the rim], well actually not only tea: the same goes for any kind of fluid. When it is spilled, it becomes a stain. Then, one has to spread it out over the whole surface. If you rub it in, it will adapt to the water and no stain will develop. Thus, this is done with tea.

Mr. Hirokawa then fetched a tea tray made of zelkova wood with an extraordinary wood grain pattern. His family had been using this tray for more than seventy years and its surface had been repeatedly and deliberately rubbed with tea.

⁸ Craft shops are often family businesses. Usually, the wife or other female relatives manage the shop, while the husband and/or other male members of the family make wooden crafts in a small workshop behind the shop. Although these days craftsmen are, increasingly, working in a corner of the or even inside the shop window.

⁹ Drinking infused green tea is an everyday activity. Normally this tea is drunk in inexpensive ceramic cups, often served without using saucers and trays.

¹⁰ There exists an extended body of literature in Japanese and in many other languages about the aesthetics of the 'Japanese Tea Ceremony'. My work is not concerned with this topic that has played a key role in the spread of stereotypical, a-historical depictions of Japanese society. I only have referred to this topic because it surfaced in discussions with my informants.

The majority of products on sale in craft shops on Miyajima are *kijimon*. We can distinguish two kinds of unlacquered woodcrafts. Firstly, functional objects made of high quality woods. These are mainly *sencha* tea utensils such as tea cup holders or tea trays, but also some *macha* tea ladles and tea caddies. Other wooden objects are, for example, incense containers in various shapes, containers for sweets or a range of trays. These days, these high quality objects are either used on special occasions, for example, to serve guests or they may be purchased as high quality gifts. A second type of unvarnished woodcrafts on sale in most shops consists of decorative objects, mainly decorative trays with scenes of Miyajima or other motives such as plants and birds carved on them. Enlarged shamoji in mature wood with scenery of Miyajima engraved on their head also fall in this category, but I will return to these objects at the end of this section.

Mr. Hirokawa explicitly calls the unvarnished wooden crafts 'unfinished products' (*hanseihin*). With frequent use over time, but also through rubbing the surface, the colour of the wood changes and the object reaches its completion. The beauty of unvarnished objects is brought out through the co-operation between maker and use. This notion of beauty as a process that links producers and consumers also resonates in Yanagi's folk craft theory of beauty (Yanagi, 1972), discussed in detail by Brian Moeran in his study of a community of potters in southern Japan (Moeran, 1997). Originally, Miyajima woodcrafts were functional items, but as they became more and more expensive they became exclusive decorative items.¹¹ A question that arises here is that if the beauty of unvarnished *kijimon* products is supposed to be brought out by using them, how then should we interpret these decorative items? Most craftsmen explained to me that tea is used to bring out the beauty of the wood grain. However, other techniques to reveal the pattern of the wood, such as rubbing the material with one's hands or with a cloth - also advised in written information accompanying some woodcrafts - were also recommended. Mrs. Hori, a retired kindergarten teacher in her late sixties from Miyajima, for example, displays a collection of high quality wooden decorative trays and statues of good luck gods in her guestroom. During my visits she regularly caressed the statues with her hands. When I asked her about this practice she told me that:

This way they become shiny. You see, through the oil from my hands. In case of the trays, it is good to spill some tea over them.

¹¹I was told that the high price of the *kijimon* products is partly due to the scarcity of the materials used, but another reason is that the traditional production process from the moment the tree is cut until the carved product is very labour-intensive and time consuming.

Craft shops on Miyajima target people who want to acquire expensive, high quality objects instead of cheap souvenirs. Mr. Takahashi, a seventy-six year old craftsman, specialises in small turnery objects such as containers for incense or tea. His shop is doing relatively well and according to him this is because his smaller size products are cheaper. However, Mr. Takahashi also has a loyal clientele who regularly return to his shop. He has been in the profession for over fifty-five years and over the years has established himself a reputation among people engaged in the tea ceremony and other popular art forms such as flower arrangement and calligraphy. These highly formalised practices, which have their roots in the minimalist aesthetics of the Tokugawa elite, have never been part of everyday life.

In contemporary Japan these traditional art forms have become a sign of status for the aspiring classes who idealise the aesthetics of the pre-modern elite (Rosenberger, 1996: 156). Today the students of these arts are mainly middle to upper middle-class full-time housewives. A large percentage of Miyajima tourists also belong to this group and this explains why most craft shops offer, apart from *sencha* utensils, a broad range of products associated with the *macha* tea ceremony such as wooden tea containers, tea scoops and trays to serve sweets. Mr. Takahashi claims that these customers are knowledgeable about high quality goods and they will purchase a certain product because it looks beautiful even if it is expensive. Mr. Hirokawa agrees that people who buy expensive crafts because of the beauty of the wood grain are basically people associated with the world of tea.¹²

I will now return to my discussion of the aesthetic appreciation of shamoji for everyday use made of zelkova and mulberry wood. Mr. Kikugawa, the craftsman who is said to have started the production of 'high quality' shamoji in rare woods, explicitly links mulberry and zelkova shamoji with utensils for the tea ceremony. In his words:

Well, although these are shamoji [points at mulberry and zelkova shamoji], we talk about them as if they are tea utensils. Well, that's where it comes from. Mulberry wood is often used for tea utensils.

It is noteworthy, that the two shamoji made from mature wood were introduced around the time of the nomination of the Miyajima woodcrafts as Traditional Crafts. This official recognition might have prompted some people on Miyajima to emulate the aesthetic discourse about the beauty of the wood grain and apply it to kitchen utensils. Brian Moeran's (1997) ethnography of a

¹²Varnished products sell better because they are cheaper -less labour intensive and cheaper materials- and because they do not require a long period of use to reveal their wood pattern.

the wood grain and apply it to kitchen utensils. Brian Moeran's (1997) ethnography of a community of potters in Onta in Kyushu, southern Japan offers an interesting comparison with my study of Miyajima woodcrafts. The simple beauty of the Onta pots, inspired Yanagi, the founder of the Japanese folk craft movement in the formulation of what constitutes crafts (*mingei*). He believed these pots epitomised true crafts because they were practical and used every day by ordinary people, as well as made by 'unknown craftsmen' cheaply and in great quantity. However, as their pots became well known, potters began to produce decorative items such as umbrella holders, but also bowls and vases used in popular art forms such as the tea ceremony and flower arranging. The potters' works were then considered to be *objets d'art* and could be sold for much higher prices than domestic pots for daily use (Moeran, 1997). Miyajima shamoji easily qualify as *mingei* because they are mundane items that were always mass-produced and sold cheaply. In recent years certain shamoji makers and retailers have attempted to transform shamoji into more expensive durable craft-objects. It is important to stress here that their main targets are middle-aged housewives who buy cheap kitchen utensils but who are also most likely to be interested in the popular art forms mentioned above.

Follow-up fieldwork conducted in the spring of 1999 revealed that the aesthetic discourse stressing the beauty of the wood grain had not been successful in the case of 'high quality' shamoji made of rare woods. How can we explain that the shamoji, unlike the Onta pots, did not make the transfer to durable goods? Here Moeran's study of the Japanese folk craft movement is again instructive. Moeran shows that Japanese women are the major purchasers of crafts not only because they use them daily in the home, but because they are the main participants in popular art forms such as the tea ceremony. Interestingly, the majority of members of the folk craft association are also women. However, when these objects are turned into expensive - often enlarged - decorative items, it is mainly men who buy them (Moeran, 1997: 213). Moeran draws on Thompson's rubbish theory (1979) in which he defines three categories of goods: rubbish, transient and durable goods. Thompson gives several examples of goods such as Steingraph silk paintings whose transformation from rubbish to durable occurred together with a shift from female to male consumption (Thompson, 1979: 33).

My data about shamoji on Miyajima confirm Moeran's point about the gendered consumption of folk crafts. We have seen that cheap shamoji for everyday use are the most popular with married middle-aged women. This is also the type of women most likely to be engaged in the formal tea ceremony. However, Miyajima shamoji, unlike Onta pots, did not become cherished objects for

shamoji have no function in the tea ceremony or in any of the other popular art forms. They remain cheap domestic utensils firmly associated with women and the kitchen. However, similarly to the Onta pots, shamoji that are enlarged, made of high quality wood or have engravings on them are mainly sold to male customers. Retired men, often visiting the island with their wives, frequently buy this type of shamoji as luxury decorations for the home. These items are markers of tradition and Japaneseness, and by extension class.

Discourses in the shops are highly adaptable to the tastes of customers and in 1999 the aesthetic discourse became exclusively linked with gigantic decorative shamoji with engravings made of expensive high quality woods. In a glass case in one corner of the Shamoji House, for example, two big shamoji made of zelkova wood are displayed. On the head of one of the shamoji displayed in the glass case the Grand Gate in front of the Itsukushima Shrine is engraved. Assistant 1 explains that zelkova wood is the best for engravings because of its beautiful pattern. Prices can reach between ten thousand (fifty pounds) and sixty thousand yen (three hundred pounds). In the shop a number of cheaper lacquered cypress shamoji with engravings are also on sale. While I worked in the Shamoji House Mr. Yamada, an elderly customer from Ibaraki Prefecture, phoned to order a big decorative shamoji made of lacquered cypress wood with the Grand Gate engraved on it. On the back of the scoop another person's name and the date (April 1999) had to be engraved. The owner explained that this was an elderly customer who had bought the same shamoji when he visited Miyajima a few months before with his wife. The shamoji he ordered by phone was intended as a gift for a relative's sixty-first birthday.

The above investigation into the aesthetic appreciation of shamoji on the island reveals that discourses in shops are fluid and continuously changing. Unsuccessful narratives may be replaced, but also slightly modified and tried on other products. The following example also illustrates this. During fieldwork in 1997 the clerks in the Shamoji House regularly stressed the aesthetic qualities of mulberry and zelkova shamoji. However, in 1999 both 'high quality' shamoji are mainly praised for their benefit to people's health. We shall see in the next section that the association of high quality small shamoji with environmental issues made them popular with younger women.

4. Environmental Concerns and Health Issues

Today 'high quality' shamoji made of mulberry and zelkova wood are the most popular shamoji in souvenir shops on Miyajima. In the Shamoji House, the biggest sellers of this type of shamoji, I

Today 'high quality' shamoji made of mulberry and zelkova wood are the most popular shamoji in souvenir shops on Miyajima. In the Shamoji House, the biggest sellers of this type of shamoji, I was told that the growing concern with nature and the environment has increased the demand for these products. Mulberry and zelkova wood are known for their healthy properties. They are, for example, used in herbal medicines. Shamoji made of these materials cost respectively eight hundred (four pounds) and one thousand two hundred yen (six pounds). According to the assistant 1 in the same shop the expensive mulberry and zelkova ergonomic shamoji are mainly bought by health conscious young women between twenty and thirty-five years old such as Miss. Oka and Miss. Tanaka from Tokyo. Both women in their early thirties are unmarried and work full time as secretaries in big financial companies. They were mesmerised by the Shamoji House and bought a bag full of merchandise for personal consumption. Mrs. Oka's bag, for example, contained two mulberry shamoji, two bamboo spatulas, two butter knives, two temaki sets¹³ and a spatula for spaghetti. Her shopping spree cost 4.900 yen (25 pounds).

Both women are representative of the second major group of female consumers on the island. These are younger women between eighteen and thirty-five, students and working women, who are either unmarried or have recently married. They have more money and time and are less bounded than housewives. It is noteworthy that this group of consumers also belongs to the generation of women who are used to regularly travelling abroad. They are well-informed knowledgeable travellers and skilful shoppers who bring home tasteful souvenirs (see Chapter 3). They are not yet fully involved in the formal cycle of gift-exchange between families. Gifts for others are not only fewer but often they also have a more personal character than those purchased by the first group of women.

Why feels this group of visitors attracted to discourses that link shamoji with the environment and personal health issues? Lise Skov (1995) has looked at the way environmental issues have been increasingly discussed in Japanese women's magazines since the beginning of the 1990s. She shows how the media driven focus on the environment, termed the 'ecology boom'¹⁴, turned ecological concern into a style detached from actual care for the environment (Skov, 1995: 171). In her words: 'ecology was a name given to a new style for women to shape their appearance' (173). The popularity of ecological shamoji among young women should be seen within this

¹³This a set consisting of a bamboo mat and small bamboo scoop used to make sushi rolls.

¹⁴Skov explains that the term 'boom' is 'a popular loanword used to describe economic as well as cultural trends' (Skov, 1995: 175).

take practical actions such as showering only once a day (Skov, 1995: 170-95). The ecological shamoji, therefore, also illustrates how larger environmental issues are translated into a concern with the immediate health of those involved.

The growing concern with environmental issues among younger women has resulted in the introduction of two new Miyachū products promoted for their health properties: plastic anti-bacterial shamoji and ecological cypress shamoji. The plastic anti-bacterial shamoji is mainly sold through wholesale networks, but they are also on sale in the Shamoji House. Below, the owner explains that they were designed in the early eighties by her husband who is also a vice-president of the Miyachū shamoji wholesale company (see Chapter 2).

well, plastic shamoji were sold everywhere and my husband thought that it wouldn't be interesting to come up with the same thing. He did not like to copy other manufacturers, so he made a scoop with a different content, a plastic scoop of high quality. This happened long before the outbreak of O-157 [in summer 1996] but I began selling them in my shop since then. The same goes for the shamoji designed by Naoko [= ecological cypress shamoji].

The 'different content' that she refers to is an inorganic antibacterial substance called zeomic. On the first page of the Miyachū product catalogue for 1999, for example, the efficiency and safety of zeomic is explained in great detail. It is claimed that by adding this substance the Miyachū plastic shamoji became far more effective against bacteria than the polypropylene plastic shamoji that comes for free with rice cookers. The reference made above to O-157 also needs further explanation. In the summer of 1996 several elementary school children died of an obscure food poisoning called O-157. Contradictory statements about its cause in the media resulted in nationwide panic. For a while sushi and other raw foods were omitted from the menu while the sales of anti-bacterial soaps, kitchen utensils and tableware soared. The anti-bacterial plastic shamoji that already existed gained in popularity. However, some people denounced plastic altogether and opted for more natural materials.

Mr. Miyazato, the president of the Miyachu wholesale company, discussed the use of plastic shamoji and the increasing concern with the environment with me:

Q: What about the sales of plastic shamoji?

A: Well, the current generation of young people became slowly used to these kinds of [plastic] things throughout their childhood, for example, through school lunches. Because since the development of heat resistant plastic, for example, all rice cookers come with plastic shamoji. So, these days, plastic shamoji are sold in high numbers. Because they were distributed in such big quantities with rice cookers, the

A: Well, the current generation of young people became slowly used to these kinds of [plastic] things throughout their childhood, for example, through school lunches. Because since the development of heat resistant plastic, for example, all rice cookers come with plastic shamoji. So, these days, plastic shamoji are sold in high numbers. Because they were distributed in such big quantities with rice cookers, the younger generation but also common people, don't feel any resistance towards plastic shamoji. But then, recently, plastic has been linked with environmental problems. This brought about a shift with people resisting plastic utensils and opting instead for wooden, natural things. Therefore, now there are also these kinds of shamoji [shows me an ecological cypress shamoji].

According to Mr. Miyazato, plastic shamoji continue to be popular among 'common people' (*ippan na hito*) and the 'younger generation' (*wakamono*). However, in recent years the intelligentsia (*intelli*) has begun to distrust plastic because they are worried about their health and the environment. Miyachū has translated this concern in the production of a cypress wood shamoji treated with zeomic. Cypress wood (*hinoki*) is known to naturally protect against bacteria. An explanatory leaflet wrapped around these shamoji reads:

'A Gift From Nature': Wooden shamoji that spare our environment are a gift from the earth. While using them the warmth (*numumon*) and the gentleness (*yasashisa*) of the soft wood is transmitted. Let's prepare food with these objects made from natural wood and receive the goodness of nature together with our meals.

Finally, I will turn to the second type of shamoji on sale in souvenir shops on Miyajima: the so-called 'prayer-shamoji' (*kigan shamoji*). These are flat board-shaped shamoji and shamoji shapes made from cheap white wood in a variety of sizes with text, images, photographs and so on printed or pasted on their head.

5. Prayer Shamoji, Shamoji Key Holders and Celebrity Shamoji

Like most other shops in the arcade, the Shamoji House displays a range of 'prayer-shamoji' in various sizes with wishes such as 'safety in the house' (*kanai anzen*), 'victory' (*hisshō*) or 'prosperity in business' (*shōbai hanjō*) written on them. In chapter 1, I have explained how the Japanese turn to deities in times of distress and pray for benefits in this world. By writing wishes on sacred objects, one can ask the deities for assistance in attaining a certain goal. The locally used term 'prayer-shamoji' is a bit confusing because it gives the impression that these shamoji have a religious meaning and are different from shamoji for practical use. 'Prayer' refers to the fact that these shamoji have wishes or other things that they are supposed to capture imprinted (see chapter 3). As I have stressed many times before no clear-cut distinction is made between practical and decorative shamoji. Different categories are offered by producers, wholesalers and shopkeepers, but any shamoji-shape is a spiritual commodity that can scoop luck.

Visitors of both genders and all ages buy prayer-shamaji. They are relatively cheap souvenirs, mainly bought as gifts for others. In standard size (22cm) they cost 500 yen (2.50 pounds), in medium size (57cm) 700 yen (3.80 pounds) and big sizes (1.20 m) start from 7.000 yen (35 pounds). Mrs Mori, a housewife in her forties from Ashiya in Hyogo Prefecture, travelled with a group of female friends by bullet train. She bought a small prayer shamaji with text and explained:

This is a souvenir for my child. Because my son is preparing for his examination, I chose one with the text 'passing exams'. He can put it in his room. I asked to have his name written on it. Well, in this way it becomes his personal shamaji (*mai-shakushi*).

Similarly, Miki, a seventeen year old girl from Nagasaki who visited the shop with her mother, bought a shamaji with the text 'filled with desire to succeed' (*yarui ki ippai*) for a friend who was studying for her university entrance exam. Mr. Kobayashi in his forties from Okayama bought a good luck shamaji with the text 'you are the best' (*anta ga saikō*) written on it. He claimed that he would show it to his wife next time they had a fight.

The Hiroshige family, a young couple in their forties with two children aged twelve and fourteen, from Fukuoka City made a day trip to Miyajima. On their way home they bought a seventy centimetres long shamaji with the text 'safety inside the house' (*kanai anzen*) for one thousand eight hundred yen (ten pounds). The owner wrote the date on the back of the scoop and wrapped it in plastic foil to protect it against dust. The Hiroshige planned to place this shamaji in the hallway of their home. It is also possible to have a special wish written on shamaji, but this service tends to be more expensive. A group of youngsters in their early twenties who were members of a martial arts club from Nagoya bought an approximately 1.20 meter long shamaji for seven thousand yen (thirty five pounds) in the Shamaji House. They asked the shop owner to write the text 'hang on' or 'do your best' (*ganbatte*) on it. The youngsters were planning to surprise one of their friends who was sick at home with the big prayer shamaji to wish him prompt recuperation.

Prayer-shamaji in all sizes with the text 'victory' written on them sell particularly well in the months leading to elections (see Chapter 6). These election-shamaji are given to candidates as a talisman for a successful election campaign. They are often bought by tourists to Miyajima, such as Mrs. Fujimori and Mrs. Hanada, two elderly women from Kagoshima, who bought four small victory shamaji. They explained that they were planning to give them to acquaintances who were participating in the upcoming elections. Another common practice is to order victory shamaji by

telephone from the Miyachu wholesale company. During March 1999, for example, a large number of giant shamoji were ordered for the local elections in mid April.

Cheap shamoji with slogans and shamoji-shaped key holders, popular among children and teenagers, also belong to the category of prayer-shamoji. As I have shown in Chapter 3, pupils on school trips account for a major segment of the tourist market on Miyajima. Children generally receive pocket money from their parents to spend during the trip. However, only a tiny amount of that money is spent on souvenirs for others. Most is spend on food, on computer games, on having each others photographs taken and on personal souvenirs. Most children I talked chose to buy a cheap personal memento of their trip. The shop Hakudateya, at the end of the shopping arcade, targets these young customers. For only three hundred yen (one pound fifty) one can have one's name, the date or any other text written on a standard shamoji. In this shop I observed several boys from a junior high school from Nagoya have their names and wishes such as 'to pass examinations' and 'victory' written on a shamoji.

Joifuru Miyajima is also frequented by children-shoppers because it offers a range of cheaper souvenirs. The shopkeeper Mrs. Okamoto explained that they consciously target this segment of the tourist market:

the school trip season is the most rewarding for us. It is mostly during April, May and June. Well, in a short while, the groups of children will be coming and then we will get really busy.

During spring 1999 I observed several young boys who acquired Miyajima key holders in Joifuru. For example, Ken Ishigawa, ten years old, from Osaka who bought a bright golden coloured key holder depicting the Grand Gate, or Hiroshi Senda, twelve, who choose a shamoji-shaped key holder with the text for good luck written on it. Groups of teenage girls also visit this shop where they buy cheap items for themselves or their relatives. The most popular items are small lacquered or bamboo tea spoons, deer dolls, or colourful hand towels with *manga*-images of deer and monkeys printed on them. Some of the older students bought shamoji with inscriptions such as 'love' (*koï*). School children hunting for souvenirs in the shopping arcade seem to avoid the Shamoji House. The owner finds this very understandable because

children don't like these kind of things [points at her merchandise] and probably my products are too expensive. There is a lot of recreation for them in the arcade. However, high school student do visit my shop, they really choose a speciality shop to look for souvenirs.

Indeed, most teenagers spend their free time in the local game centre. However, some mainly female, high school students (aged between sixteen and eighteen) do show interest in the Shamoji House. Shamoji with paper dolls pasted on them and shamoji-shaped key holders with images of the different animals of the Chinese zodiac printed on them are displayed on a rack close to the entrance of the shop to attract these customers.

In many souvenir shops one can also find an assortment of decorative lute-shaped wooden boards displayed on stands. In my view, these products should also be grouped with the prayer-shamoji. As we have seen in chapter 1, the shape of the Japanese lute is said to have inspired the production of the first shamoji. These lute-shaped objects may also have wishes similar to the prayer shamoji written on them. However, some have colourful clay images of, for example, the seven good luck gods or the Grand Gate pasted on them. Still others have an image of a Bugaku dancer or a Heian court lady painted on them. In the Shamoji House lute-shamoji with similar images are sold as 'Nō-shamoji'. The owner of the Shamoji House explained that lute-shaped shamoji are very popular during the New Year period because they are auspicious objects.

A last group of prayer-shamoji sold on the island are those linked with Japanese celebrities from show business and sports. In this case the text added is not a wish but the name, signature or handprint of a famous person. We can distinguish between two types of celebrity-shamoji. First, there are big shamoji that are actually signed by a celebrity who visited the island and displayed in full view within the shop. These shamoji are not for sale but they serve as a kind of advertisement to draw the customers' attention and entice them to buy a shamoji. I have discussed the first type of celebrity shamoji in Chapter 4 as a strategy to personalise the exchange in the shops. Here I will focus on a second type of celebrity-shamoji, the cheap standard shamoji on which the name of certain personalities is written or, as we shall see below, their face is depicted. This type of shamoji attracts a particular audience.

The first example of this practice we find in Hiroshige Souvenirs. In the front of this shop there is a big display of celebrity-shamoji. The owner wrote the names of celebrities in black ink on shamoji of various sizes. These are cheap souvenirs which cost between 300 and 500 yen depending on the size (Plate 5.1).



Plate 5.1: Shamoji, linked with a variety of celebrities in the Hiroshige shop, are popular with teenagers.

In the shopkeepers view:

people who visit Miyajima want to take home an appropriate souvenir. These shamoji are not only a speciality (*meibutsu*) from Miyajima but also a commemorative object associated with a certain celebrity.

On Miyajima it is mainly teenage girls who are drawn to this shop. Naoko, the fourteen-year-old student from Koriyama high school who featured in case study 2 of Chapter 3 bought a celebrity-shamoji. Another example is Ayako and Kaori, two sixteen years old girls from Yamaguchi, who visited Miyajima with their grandmother who bought a celebrity shamoji as a gift for a friend at home.

In fact, in the Yamato craft shop located in the shopping arcade, we can see yet another pioneering example of celebrity-shamoji. This shop is owned and operated by Mr. Miyato, an eighty-six year old grandfather. He is a locally known as Yamato Papa because he has for almost twenty years presented his own radio show called 'Papa Times'. Eight years ago he also started a career as a TV talent. Once every two weeks he appears on Hiroshima TV with his own informative programme about leisure in Hiroshima Prefecture. He told me he tries to feature Miyajima as often as possible. Only a short while ago he made a TV commercial about Miyajima with the slogan: 'Aren't there any good things to experience on Miyajima?'. This case is exceptional in that we are not dealing with a famous outsider, but with a local celebrity. Whenever I visited Mr. Miyato in his shop people passing-by would peep into the shop saying: 'Hello, I saw you on TV' or 'Look there is papa'. Yamato Papa explained that:

Many people who see me on TV visit me in my shop. They want to shake my hands and take pictures. Because they made the effort to visit they want to buy some kind of souvenir. Then they can say: 'this is a souvenir from Yamato Papa'.

Because his TV fans wish to buy something cheap to take home, Mr. Miyato produced for the commemoration of his three hundredth show a shamoji with his face drawn on it with crayons. He sells these shamoji for 500 yen (2.5 pounds) each in his shop.

6. Discussion: Verbal, Material and Performative Practices

Chapter 5 has considered how through the mediation of female salespersons the merchandise on sale, in particular shamoji, speaks to a variety of customers in souvenir shops on Miyajima. Depending on who the customer is, sales people will promote a different shamoji while drawing on a specific discourse. In the case of narratives about the practical qualities of certain scoops,

female shop clerks relay a wealth of information about their personal experiences as housewives in the kitchen to their customers. Often these exchanges turn the process of selling and buying into lively performances through which housewives confirm their expertise about all kinds of matters related to food preparation. However, other stories such as those that focus on the aesthetic qualities of the woods are more problematic. The rhetoric about the aesthetic of the wood grain of scoops made of rare woods, for example, illustrates how discourses surrounding shamoji at the production and distribution stages may influence the promotion of shamoji in the shops. Powerful wholesale middlemen such as Miyachū draw on a range of resources to construct this narrative which is then disseminated in the shops. Because the majority of sales people possess no specific knowledge about the woods used, it is difficult to bring certain messages such as those that connect shamoji with ideas of Japaneseness and tradition across in a convincing way. Only those salespersons committed to studying the characteristics of woods promoted are able to provide their customers with this.

My study has clearly demonstrated that any discourse that circulates in the shops goes through a process of trial and error. If a certain story does not catch on with the consumers it will be abandoned, changed or tried on another product. This shows clearly that consumers are not passive recipients of promotion techniques in the shops. The talk about the beauty of the wood grain, for example, was first applied to shamoji made of expensive rare woods, but this combination proved unsuccessful. Consequently, the same rhetoric was successfully tried on high quality giant shamoji with scenic views engraved. Discourses in the shops also reflect the latest changes, events and trends in Japanese society at large. An example of this is the increasing talk in recent years about the ecological and health properties of the shamoji. The practice of sending shamoji imprinted with prayers to the deities, on the other hand, has been updated to match contemporary society. Shamoji with slogans such as 'You are the Best' or 'Love' or shamoji with the names of celebrities imprinted target the young, while shamoji with the image of nō-actors or clay images of the good luck gods attract an older audience. These examples also demonstrate how locals attempt to link the range of shamoji on sale with different consumers through multiple interpellating narratives circulating in shops on Miyajima.

The American anthropologist Webb Keane's study (1997) about the use of ritual speech during formal gift occasions among the Sumba in Indonesia offers an interesting comparison. He argues that words, things and performances are representational practices through which human actions are mediated (Keane, 1997: 20). Thus, discourses circulating in the shops should be interpreted

as one kind of practice among others that mediate human interaction. More important for my discussion is his point that spoken words anchored in objects must accompany gift transactions (ibid.195). On Sumba we are dealing with ritual speech grounded in the past that directly links the agency of words spoken with the ancestors. This kind of language is quite different from the promotional speech employed by sales people during commercial interactions with customers in retail sites on Miyajima. However, both cases are also similar in that these are instances in which speech is connected to material goods in order to enable successful performative interactions between participants. Narratives linked with shamoji in the shops are performative acts that can turn the purchase into what might be seen as an appropriate act. The abstract contemplation of qualities of the shamoji, for example, that are discussed between shopkeeper and customer makes the exchange more than just an anonymous transaction. The discourse in the shops also serves as a form of self-legitimation. Through the talk in the shops, the customers are able to justify to themselves both the act of buying and the expenditure and it is, for example, a way for them to develop their connoisseurship and/or status.

Simon Coleman's (2000) discussion of the use of sacred language by Word of Life Christians in Sweden sheds light upon how the embodiment of words in things, but also in images and people, tunes in with broader processes of objectification. Charismatic words are turned in objects that are made active and mobile through the practices of the believers. However, once sacred words are removed from the speaker they lead a 'semi-autonomous existence'; they are aspects of the expanded self of the speaker directed to a recipient (Coleman, 2000: 200). In this case there does not need to exist a permanent social relationship between the donor and the receiver. The recipient may be unknown and no act of reciprocity is necessary. However, the expansive agency of the words is expected, eventually, to lead to a return, in this case from a third party, namely, God (ibid. 204). Within the Swedish religious context, embodied words are linked with an expansive divine agency, while in Sumba, the efficacy of the speakers' words is associated with the ancestors.

Both Keane (1997) and Coleman (2000) focus on the embodied qualities of speech during gifting. In the case of the Sumba, words and things are exchanged in tandem within one community. Word of Life Christians exchange charismatic gifts of embodied words or money with a generic recipient. This chapter about the use of discourses in shops on Miyajima has demonstrated that language grounded in objects can also play an important role in commodity purchase. All three

studies challenge the clear boundaries between gift and commodity exchange and, by extension, between people and things characteristic of the western model of society.

Chapter 4 and 5 have revealed the processes [by which the particularity of shamoji are made appropriate to the particularity of consumers in souvenir shops on the island. It is evident that this represents not some simple distinction between the material and social world. The act of purchase should instead be seen as a dynamic, interactive performance. Shopkeepers experiment with and evaluate various possible discourses that, depending on forms of legitimation required, may lead to a collusion between shop and customer in creating a case for any particular purchase. But this process cannot be viewed in isolation. The prior process of production and indeed the long history of the shamoji in the area are often the point of reference for sales discussions in the shops. At the moment of purchase the customer looks forward to the context of gifting and the return to the domestic arena. In the next chapter I will turn to the consumption of shamoji in urban homes. This will allow us to consider the degree to which these same discourses that circulate in the shops also occur within the domestic arena. To what extent does the rhetoric about shamoji on the island relate to their significance in distant homes?

Section C – The Locus of the Spiritual in the Domestic

- **Chapter 6 The Materiality of Luck**
- **Chapter 7 Souvenirs, Gifts and Good Luck Charms**

Chapter 6 The Materiality Of Luck

Words and Things as the Loci of Value

1. Introduction: The Material Culture of Luck

In this Chapter, I want to return to the category of spiritual commodities called *engimono* introduced in Chapter 1. They fit well in Section C about the Japanese home because their traditional place is in the house on the god shelf (*kamidana*), integrated in the cult of local and national deities. They are also found on *engidana*, special altars for good luck charms in teahouses or other commercial enterprises. However, no strict rules seem to apply. These days, houses with a god shelf are becoming rare and the material culture of luck can be found throughout the house. In the next chapter, I will discuss the loci of *engimono* in contemporary homes. Chapter 6 is concerned with the nature of the spirituality embodied in these charms. It aims to uncover how *engimono* are supposed to work.

The sheer variety of forms, materials and applications of *engimono* makes it difficult to attempt a comprehensive classification. Chapter 1 has considered shamoji as *engimono* linked with the deity Benzaiten and Miyajima. However, the range of *engimono* available in contemporary Japan is not necessarily linked with a particular place, temple or deity. Shamoji, for example, are distributed at religious institutions nation-wide. Some famous examples are the Kasuga Grand Shrine in Nara, the Kirishima Shrine in Kyushu and the Sensōji Temple in Tokyo. There are beside countless examples of small, local shrines and temples that distribute shamoji, particularly, during the New Year's period when the majority of good luck charms are purchased. New Year is the time of year when the theme of transition, transformation and getting rid of hindrances is particularly strong. In contemporary Japan, it remains customary to visit a shrine or temple to pray for good fortune in the coming year. The most popular New Year's good luck charm is a magic arrow (*hamaya*) thought to have the power to shoot evil. Magic arrows are ubiquitous, but there is also a range of other, often place-specific New Year's *engimono*, such as shamoji on Miyajima or good fortune rakes (*kumade*) at the Ōtorii Shrine in the Asakusa district in Tokyo.

The French anthropologist Kyburz defines *engimono* as 'an auspicious object considered to have the power to fulfil wishes for good fortune, prosperity, happiness, longevity, luck and the whole range of other human desires' (Kyburz, 1991: 108). I have called them good luck charms. But

what is luck? The concept is intrinsically linked with the human condition and has been discussed at great length within Eastern and Western thought.¹ The discussion of the western notion of luck and the philosophical debates surrounding it by key thinkers such as Aristotle, Aquinas and Kant fall outside the scope of my thesis. I only want to mention briefly here that the western idea of luck places a strong emphasis on chance and unpredictability. It implies the existence of some kind of agency, good or bad, outside the control of the human individual.

I am aware that my use of the English term luck is highly problematic. Luck does not capture the richness of nuances that surround the concept within the Japanese context.² Most contemporary Japanese anticipate times of calamities and misfortune. The importance attached to luck in everyday life can be traced back to the Japanese notion of karmic causality (see Chapter 1). It is understood that through karmic relationships of cause and effect all physical events have spiritual causes. Misfortune can be averted by taking proper spiritual precautions (Reader: 1991: 47-8). The widespread concern with luck was also influenced by Taoist ideas introduced from China.³ The continuous popularity of complex Taoist astrological calendars containing practical guidelines for individual practices illustrates this.⁴ Contemporary wedding ceremonies, for example, are still held on days of great peace (*taian*). Another example of the continuous influence of Taoist astrology is the widespread belief that individuals are more prone to attract misfortune during specific unlucky years (*yakudoshi*)⁵ (Lewis, 1998).

The extended and varied Japanese terminology for luck adds to my claim that it is considered an important quality in the world that affects people's lives. The following are some of the most commonly employed terms: *Fuku*, as used in *shichi-fuku-jin*; the seven good-luck-gods, refers to blessings from the deities. Originally, offerings of food and drink made to the deities and distributed and consumed among villagers were called *fuku*. Today, this term connotes with a more general notion of auspiciousness. The Chinese character for *fuku*, 福, appears, for example,

¹For a discussion of luck within Western Philosophy see the edited volume called *Moral Luck* (Statman, 1993).

² The English term luck or lucky, locally pronounced *rakki*, has also been appropriated into the Japanese language. *Rakki-seben*, the lucky seventh inning, for example is common in Baseball jargon.

³Taoism, which came from China was never institutionalised in Japan, but it strongly influences folk beliefs and practices.

⁴The Gregorian calendar was adopted in Japan in 1873 as part of the government-led modernisation process. Previous interpretations of time were considered superstition, linked with irrational behaviour and made illegal (Shimada, 1994:110-12). However, pre-modern calendars based on the old moon-sun system have remained popular until today.

on a variety of auspicious objects that are distributed during the New Year's period. It is also printed on items of material culture of everyday life, particularly objects linked with food consumption such as sake cups, noodle bowls, and chopsticks. 'In with good fortune (*fuku*), out with the devil (*oni*)' is the expression recited when beans are thrown to drive away evil forces during the Setsubun festival held annually at the beginning of February.⁶ This also illustrates that good and bad luck are seen as two sides of the same coin because 'to invite good luck one has to drive away evil' (Komatsu, 1998:10).

Un, a second term associated with luck, expresses movement. The same character is, for example, used for the verb *hakobu*, to carry or transport. *Un* can be translated as destiny or fate and relates back to my discussion of karma and the progress through different realms of life in Chapter 1. In Japanese Dictionaries *meguriawase*, 'a turn of Fortune's wheel' is often given as a synonym for *un*. Without movement (*fu-un*) and bad movement (*un ga warui*) are common expressions for bad luck. *Saiwai* or the more colloquial term *shiawase*, written with the same character, have a strong connotation of prosperity and happiness. The Chinese character for this term is often used in combination with some of the other words for luck to form new expressions for good luck such as *kōun* (*shiawase* + *un*) and *kōfuku* (*shiawase* + *fuku*).

Finally, *engi* is most relevant for my work. It is a contraction of the Buddhist concept '*inen seigi*' which holds that direct (*in*) and indirect (*en*) causes lead to physical outcomes (*seigi*). 'Having a good *engi*' is a common expression for 'good fortune'. Buddhism stresses the agency of the individual in averting its destiny. In other words, through their actions individuals can have a direct effect (*in*) on phenomena that occur in the world. Divine assistance belongs to the category of indirect causes out of which good results are born. In this case, *en*, literally bond or thread, refers to relationships with the deities through which people try to influence their fate (see Chapter 1). *Engimono*, the main focus of this study, are 'things that assist in bringing about a good *engi*'. Komatsu calls them 'seeds of luck' (*fuku no tane*) (Komatsu, 1998: 34-5) because, even if they enable people to connect with certain deities that can offer assistance (*en*), *engimono* are only thought to be efficient if they are backed up by individual efforts (*in*). This further indicates that a

⁵There exists an extended list of unlucky years for each sex, but the most significant date for women is when they are thirty-three years old. For men it is their forty-second birthday. People of this age make repeated visits to religious centres to pray for protection. .

⁶ During Setsubun ceremonies at religious institutions, priests recite this phrase while throwing beans to chase out devils. Setsubun sets consisting of a bag of beans and a devil mask are on sale so people can enact this performance at home.

certain degree of human intentionality is considered necessary in order to acquire luck. Next, I will explore the link between luck, human agency and other forms of causation.

2. Luck and Agency

An analogy can be drawn between the Buddhist concept of causation expressed above and Gell (1997)'s view about the relationship between causation and agency. He defines agency as

a culturally prescribed framework for thinking about causation, when what happens is (in some vague sense) supposed to be intended in advance by some person-agent or thing-agent (Gell, 1997: 17).

His distinction between primary and secondary agents (ibid.:19) corresponds with the Buddhist notion of direct (*in*) and indirect (*en*) causes. Causal intention can be located in persons and things but also, as my case study shows, in other external sources such as deities, ghosts or ancestors. *Engimono* are secondary agents that make things happen in the world.

The agency attributed to *engimono* resembles the Polynesian concept of *mana*, which refers to an independent animated force attributed to objects that are part of exchange networks. However, the spiritual power I am concerned with is perhaps more comparable with the Indonesian notion of *dewa*, defined by Keane as '(a) spirit, (the) soul, fortune, fate, life force, or reproductive potential' (Keane, 1997: 202). A first aspect of *dewa* that is comparable with the Japanese notion of luck is the fact that it is considered to play an important role in bringing about success and wealth. Wealth is not simply based on economic principles but related to one's place in the world. Individual efforts can only be fruitful with the intervention of some external force (Keane, 1997: 204).

Secondly, the idea that a person's *dewa* is thought to be strengthened or weakened through exchange is also important. Keane talks about the importance of matching *dewa* between parties and mentions the importance of similar *dewa* of husbands and wives in the creation of value (ibid. : 205). The Japanese concept of bonding (*en*) in order to influence one's fortune indirectly has similar implications. I have shown how through exchanges people can strengthen bonds with the deities and increase their luck or merits. However, bonds between people are also considered important in the creation of values. The fact that the term *en* is also used for relationships between families that are not related by blood illustrates this, 'To tie together bonds,' (*en wo musubu*) means to find a love match or to marry, while, 'to cut a bond', (*en wo kiru*) points at

separation or divorce. The relationship between luck, the mutual dependency between people and the pressure of exchange will be taken up again in Chapter 7.

The Anakalangeses talk about having strong or weak *dewa*. Similarly, Japanese may have good or bad *engi*. This indicates that the spirituality that I have called luck has the potential to become oppressive. In Indonesia some actions such as treating the ancestors' valuables which 'serve as an indexical link that mediates between the living and the dead' with care, result in a good, strong *dewa*. Through recurrent activities such as ritual speech performances, the living have to assert their relationship to these valuables (Keane, 1997: 217). Whereas the valuables of the ancestors are inalienable objects that metonymically link the present with the past, *engimono* are ephemeral items that mediate between this world and the world of the deities (Chapter 1). Their power is thought to weaken over time. Like other portable charms distributed at religious centres, they are only supposed to be effective until one's wishes are fulfilled or until the beginning of a New Year. Old charms should be regularly exchanged for new ones. Through rituals of renewal, preferably enacted during the New Year's period, relationships or bonds with deities can be confirmed or re-established.

The importance of taking special care of old *engimono*, for example by returning them to religious institutions, will be discussed in the next chapter. Here, I want to stress that their ephemerality does not need to make these objects less valuable. The anthropologist Susanne Kuechler (1987, 1992), for instance, has shown that the value of things can be, on the contrary, located in their ephemeral qualities. In New Ireland (Papua New Guinea), for example, it is the continuous renewal of carefully produced Malangan carvings that is significant for the ongoing creation of social relationships (Kuechler, 1987, 1992). In the Japanese context, the ongoing renewal of *engimono* similarly objectifies the continuation of bonds or relationships between devotees and their deities, and by extension religious institutions. These ideas differ substantially from the importance given to durability and the permanent repositories of social memory within many other societies. The ancestral valuables of the Anakalangeses are an example of this.

Thus far, I have concentrated on *engimono* distributed at religious institutions, but I want to stress that they may also be sold at commercial outlets such as craft shops or even through magazines. The *uso*, a wooden statue of a small colourful bird (bull finch), for example, is a well-known *engimono* associated with the deity Tenjin. *Uso* were first sold at the Dazaifu Tenmangu Shrine in northern Kyushu, but now a large number of shrines linked with this deity throughout Japan sell

them. Because the birds also became known as crafts from Kyushu, they are sold in craft centres nation-wide. Another example of the commercial distribution of *engimono* is a range of products associated with the year of the snake, called *engimono*, which were on sale in the 2001 New Year's edition of the magazine *Serai*. Among these items were a silver teaspoon made in Germany with a snake engraved on the handle (10.000 yen) or a bottle of Suntory Midoshi (Year of the Snake) Whiskey bottled twelve years previously and sold in a bottle shaped like a good luck ship (6000 yen).

Engimono are not mere embodiments of luck; they are tools that help to invite luck or drive away evil. As such, they imply action. The next section will consider how exactly these charms are supposed to work. We will see that they are attributed with a certain independent agency grounded in their physical properties.

3. Powerful Language

The power in many good luck charms is released through homophonic association. The following examples illustrate how this technique works. Images of frogs, for instance, are employed as good luck charms in Japan because the word for frog, '*kaeru*', is a homonym for the verb 'to return'. These charms are thought to help people to return to a normal state, for example, after an illness or to return safely home from travel. This also explains the practice of keeping a tiny figure of a frog with the change in one's purse. The frog is thought to make money spent return. The efficacy of the colourful wooden statue of a bull finch, introduced above, is also based on homophones. *Uso* is the name of this bird but it also means 'a lie'. The bird absorbs lies and bad luck throughout the year. *Usokae* means 'to return the *uso* bird' but also 'to make a lie void'. It is said that if one turns in last year's bird for a new one, one can erase the bad luck that occurred in the past year.

The above cases of the frog and the *uso*-bird illustrate how a charm might be invested with agency through the use of homophones of action verbs. This technique is even more interesting when applied to tools or utensils, which form a major group within *engimono*. Examples are a rake (*kumade*) used as a tool to rake or collect (*atsumeru*, *torikomu*) good fortune or more precisely money and a minnow (*mi*), an aid to single out (*yoriwakeru*) good and bad luck. Returning to the shamoji, its agency is linked with homophones of two verbs used for scooping: firstly, the verb *sukuu* which means 'to scoop', and also 'to save', 'to rescue'; and, secondly, *meshi wo toru*, which is another way to say 'to scoop rice', and also 'to capture'. Both these interpretations were given

by religious professionals. Mr. Nozaka, the head Shinto priest at the Itsukushima Shrine on Miyajima, opted for the latter explanation while Mr. Fujimoto, a Buddhist priest at the Ishinji Temple in central Osaka chose the former. On Miyajima, an excess of text in the form of tourist pamphlets, notes put in the wrapping of souvenirs, and information boards, use these homophones to explain the power of shamoji to tourists. At all religious institutions where shamoji were used as votive offerings or distributed as charms, I also found elaborate textual explanations surrounding the homophonic association between scooping and the efficacy of the shamoji. In conclusion, the everyday act of scooping, like raking, sifting, measuring and so forth and so on lies at the base of their use as magical objects to invite luck with.

In the next chapter, I will look at how shamoji through their function as kitchen utensils are linked with women in the domestic arena. Here, I will only briefly focus on how shamoji through their association with rice⁷ became used as a metaphor for plenty, prosperity and wealth. The mundane practice of scooping rice in the domestic arena has been described as a highly ritualised activity. Takatori, for example, argues that while scooping rice in the home with shamoji, good luck or its embodiment, rice, is captured, distributed and then consumed among family members (Takatori, 1972). In several tales of *A Survey of Japanese Folktales (Nihon mukashibanashi tsūkan, 1977)*, a compilation of folk stories from all the prefectures in Japan, for example, the shamoji appears as a magical tool to produce white rice or money everlastingly⁸. One may have to scoop according to a prescribed formula in order to work magic or the power may be inherent in the shamoji.

The power of the shamoji is grounded in the action of scooping and the physical attribute that influences its efficacy, therefore, is its shape. In other words, the shamoji shape implies agency. Any shamoji shape, be it made of plastic, wood, bamboo, or stainless steel, can scoop good luck. Other than, for example, plain eating spoons, shamoji-forms are supposed to scoop without human intentionality. As I have demonstrated above, the power of the shamoji is endowed through homophonic association. In Chapter 1 I argued that Japanese religion is grounded in

⁷ A detailed discussion of the role of rice in Japanese society falls outside the scope of my thesis (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1994). Other kitchen utensils associated with rice, for example the masu (a square-shaped wooden measurement), a winnow and the mortar were also transformed into magical objects. Their ritual use can also be traced back to their function in the house

⁸ One of the most frequent occurring stories is Paradise of the Demons (*Oni no rakudo*). A very poor old man (or old woman) eats a simple lunch of rice balls while working in the mountains. One of the balls falls into a hole. The old man runs after the ball and ends up in the land of the demons. They are having a party and scoop rice with a golden magic shamoji. When the demons get drunk, the old man steals this shamoji (occasionally the demons give the shamoji away) and returns home.

bodily practices, but I did not mean to suggest that language is considered trivial. On the contrary, sacred words play a significant role in the religious world in Japan. A distinction should be made between the in-depth study and recitation of sacred Sanskrit texts by religious professionals and the use of sacred words by the masses. In short, in Japanese religious practices sacred words are not reduced to the intentionality of the person, but the exteriority of words is invested with value. For lay people, the power of spoken words⁹ is located in the repetition of their sounds. The case of homophones illustrates this point because their power is not located in the meaning of their content but in the repetition of their sounds.

The fact that language is employed to endow material culture with power needs further explanation. The intertwining of embodied words and things is a common feature in many religions. In his excellent study of exchange relationships among the Anakalangeses in Indonesia, Webb Keane (1997), for example, argues that 'neither words nor things should be assumed in advance to be the primary media of exchange and communication, or the unique loci of value' (Keane, 1997: 66). My research on the Miyajima shamoji similarly shows that, through their material properties, both word and things can mediate in the ongoing process of the creation of values between subjects and objects. Another item of material culture that clearly illustrates the way spoken words and things often intermingle in everyday religious practices is the Catholic rosary. The rosary is an aid to invoke the Virgin. Its sacred power is released when running the beads through one's fingers while reciting a well-determined sequence of prayers (Warner, 1979: 305-309). The use of the rosary and the development of a Cult of the Rosary was thought to increase the interior contemplation of the faithful (ibid. 307). However, the repetitive nature of praying the rosary operates like meditation techniques in other religions such as Buddhism. In order to be effective, the repetition of words - the stress is on the exteriority of the words instead of the intentionality of the individual- has to go with the mechanical turning of the beads.

Engimono often have the words 'to invite good luck' or 'to improve one's fate' (*kaiun*) written on them. In the east Asian region, there exists a strong notion of writing as an embodiment of power. Through Buddhism, the Japanese adopted the Chinese writing system and the use of pictograms (Chapter 2). This is a prime example of embodied language whereby words are actually images. Indian Tantric Buddhism places great emphasis on the sacred or seed sounds of the Sanskrit

⁹ Sacred words spoken by the masses are rare in Shinto rituals, but in Buddhism the repetition of spoken words occupies a more important role. In Buddhism the repetitive reproduction of the sounds of sacred mantra is thought to release their power.

alphabet. However, in China - and consequently in Korea and Japan - the focus of Buddhist worship shifted to writing the seed syllables. Each written seed character was interpreted as a representation of a Buddha and became the object of veneration. Seed syllables were, for example, inscribed on paintings or other representations of Buddhist deities to consecrate the image (Stevens, 1981: 56-79). In Japan copying sacred texts is considered to be an act of devotion. Today at many temples in Japan visitors are given the opportunity to copy sutras as a form of prayer to the deities. When writing seed syllables in the proper order one is becoming one with the Buddha or Bodhisatva being formed (Stevens, 1981:32).

Jōdō Shinshū, the Pure Land Buddhist sect, offers a good example of how the spoken as well as the written word is considered to be imbued with spiritual power in Japan. This sect teaches followers that they can reach an experience of oneness with the Buddha through the chanting the words: 'I surrender myself to Amida Nyorai'. However, it also considers the written sign of this Buddha per se to have the power to ensure good fortune. Sacred words of power are also central in the Shingonshū (True Word) school of Buddhism which has a powerful base on Miyajima (Chapter 1).

The Miyajima stamp is one example of embodied language invested with power (Chapter 2). Text on shamoji written in calligraphy is another example. In her study on the physicality of words, Danet (1997) argues that most world religions aesthetise the writing of their scripture to set it apart and highlight its special symbolic function. Danet focuses on the personification of the Torah in the Jewish tradition (Danet, 1997: 11-2), but other examples are the special ornamentation of passages of the Bible and the elegant block-print collections of Tibetan texts. The Jewish and Islamic appreciation of micrography or text 'written into either geometric or abstract forms or woven into the shapes of objects, animals or human beings' (Avrin, 1981: 43) exemplify how sacred words are conveyed into visual forms. In China and Japan, writing and its material culture is highly aestheticised (Danet, 1997: 15-6). Plates with the name of Buddhist or Shinto deities written in calligraphy occupy central places in temples and shrines. Moreover, it is customary for the head abbots of large temples to write pieces of calligraphy. These calligraphic works are considered to be embodiments of the priest's power and are given as presents to parishioners. The head monk of the Daishoin Temple on Miyajima, for example, wrote good luck messages in calligraphy on the giant shamoji in the Hall of Entire Fire on top of Mount Misen and on a shamoji hanging above the entrance of a local restaurant.

Above, I have suggested that any shamoji-shape can scoop luck. On Miyajima Island, I found ample evidence that the shape of the shamoji is considered most significant to work its powers as a good luck charm. This shape was taken as the basis for a multitude of local applications. I will continue examining how the power of the shamoji-shape linked with the domestic arena and women is appropriated for other specific purposes on the island. Section 3 is concerned with shamoji-shapes inscribed with slogans. I will examine how, through adding language to the shape, its possibilities as a good luck charm are expanded. In Section 4, I will look at enlarged shamoji and explore what is achieved through blowing-up the size of the shamoji-shape.

4. Written Petitions, Prayer Shamoji

On Miyajima, one particular category of shamoji shape is that inscribed with slogans. Re-occurring examples are 'prosperity in business', 'safety for the family', 'to pass entrance examinations' and 'good health'. The same shamoji with written petitions are sold at religious centres and souvenir shops on the island. Locally, these scoops are called 'prayer-shamoji' (*kigan shamoji*), irrespective of where they are purchased.¹⁰ Today, prayer-shamoji are employed in two ways. Firstly, they are left behind as offerings at religious centres, after inscribing them with one's name, age and other personal information.¹¹ Secondly, they may be taken home, often as a gift for relatives or friends.

I have explained in Chapter 1 that one way of asking the deities for assistance in a range of worldly matters during the Tokugawa period was through purchasing offerings. These were material objects with petitions written on them and left either at the site or taken home on loan. In both cases, one had to revisit the shrine or temple after the prayer was granted to thank the deity. Gratitude was shown by donating money or in case of the latter by offering the object in loan together with an identical newly bought object (Iwai, 1980: 169).¹² Returning to the shamoji, Motoyama and Yanagita, who conducted their fieldwork before WW2, repeatedly refer to the custom of offering two shamoji when a wish was granted (Motoyama, 1934; Yanagida, 1957). My research suggests that this practice is far less common today. On Miyajima, prayer-shamoji are left behind as offerings at the Zenjōkaku Sutra Hall, the Daishoin Temple and the Daiganji Temple. Still, a far larger amount of prayer-shamoji is taken home. It may be suggested that there

¹⁰ The same term is also employed to refer to any shamoji with texts or images added. I will analyse the range of prayer shamoji currently on sale in souvenir shops in Chapter 6.

¹¹ At the Daiganji and Zenjōkaku Temple, it is also possible to offer a shamoji on which one can write one's own wish with a black marker.

has been a historical development from leaving one offering behind and taking another home to only taking an item home. However, my data does not sufficiently back up this hypothesis.

In any case, I am more interested in exploring the role of petitions written on shamoji. The slogans on shamoji specify the kind of luck that the shamoji shape is asked to scoop within a particular context. Luck within the context of business and retailing, for example, is linked with profit and money, while luck for the family commonly refers to safety and health for its members. The name and the age of the person who needs the luck is frequently added. We have seen above that prayers sent to the deities are only considered to be effective if they are backed up with individual effort. Similarly, in order for good luck shamoji with slogans to be effective a certain degree of intentionality of the individual is necessary as well.

Starrett's (1995) study of commodities with religious utterances from the scripture or the name of God printed on them in Egypt offers an interesting comparison. He argues that the supposed efficacy attributed to these objects depends on the situation and on people's social backgrounds (Starrett, 1995: 59). For the majority of the Egyptians, written sacred words are endowed with power outside the intentionality of the individual. They are often linked with more everyday notions of Islamic thought, focusing on success, luck and Divine protection. The intentionality of these embodied words is either situated in a Divine being or in the exteriority of the words as in the case of the written name of God (*ibid.*:53-4). The intellectual elite, on the other hand, argues that only by internalising sacred words through study will their power be revealed (Starrett, 1995: 53). In this case, the intentionality of humans is given prime importance in activating the power in the words.

Some Egyptian intellectuals consider the objects with religious texts to be 'reminders of God' that make you think of God (*ibid.*: 61). A similar line of thought is taken by Colleen McDannell (1995) in order to explain the working of pious slogans printed on Christian commodities in the US. In the catalogues of Gospel Trumpet, today's Warner Press, we find a series of wall decorations with popular scripture mottoes from as early as 1897. These were mass-produced versions of embroidered texts crafted by Victorian women (*ibid.*: 233). Texts read, for example: 'Prepare to meet thy God', 'Behold, Now is the day of Salvation' or, since the beginning of the twentieth

¹²See Nagazawa for a detailed account of the use of offerings during the Tokugawa period (Nagazawa, 1996: 3-4).

century, expressions of faith such as 'Jesus Never Fails' or 'Abide in Me'. (ibid.: 233-34). According to McDannell, religious mottoes are visual reminders of 'what God would have you do' (ibid.243). The embodied words linked with the Divine power prompt us to respond.

Another interesting point put forward by Starrett in his study is that the stress placed on internalisation of sacred words through study was translated into an embodied practice by using drinking cups with sacred inscriptions written on them. In this way, while drinking from these cups, people literally consume words through the medium of water. Sometimes ink that dissolves in water is used (Starrett, 1995: 57). In the case of the shamoji we, similarly, are dealing with a container inscribed with texts which is employed to transport food. Thus, rice -or other food stuff- can be seen as the medium through which the power of embodied words can be internalised. The Belgian religious studies researcher Pirotte (1986) gives several examples of the way sacred words or images are internalised through food in Catholic Belgium. Most interesting are pictures and scripture texts made from edible paper and, more recently, lollipops showing pictures of the Pope (Pirotte, 1986: 416-17).

Next, I want to focus on how by changing the size of shamoji shapes their power may be appropriated to a range of modern conditions such as sports, politics and business.

5. Size Matters: Giant Shamoji, Sports, Elections and Business

A number of large shamoji with wishes written on them rest against the walls or hang from the ceiling of the Senjōkaku, a Buddhist Sutra Hall, on Miyajima. The oldest offerings left behind are more than two metres high and date back to the end of the nineteenth century. The text inscribed reads 'prayers for eternal fortunes in war' (*buunchōkyū*). A large number of names, the signatures of soldiers, are written in black ink criss-crossed over the whole surface of these scoops. At some point during the end of the nineteenth century, shamoji were turned into gigantic talismans for the military on Miyajima. How did this relationship between a kitchen utensil linked with women and the domestic and warfare develop? By way of comparison, Warner (1979) discusses the association between the Virgin and war in Western Christianity. In short, the power of the Virgin has been repeatedly appropriated to bring victory during wars. An icon of Maria, today kept in the S.Maria Della Vittoria in Rome, for instance, is said to have brought about victory for Catholicism during the 'Thirty Years War' in the seventeenth century (Warner, 1979: 303-5). Returning to the shamoji, it seems that during times of national instability, locals enlarged shamoji and turned them

into powerful tools to scoop victory with.¹³ As mentioned above, the efficacy of the shamoji is grounded in the homophones of verbs used for scooping such as *meshi wo toru* (to scoop rice). *Meshitoru* means 'to capture the enemy', which indicates the possibility of adapting the power of the scoop to the context of warfare.

More recently offered, large shamoji in the Senjōkaku Sutra Hall carry petitions for 'strength to endure hardship' (*shinobu*), 'victory' (*hisshō*), 'prosperity in business' (*hanjō*) or 'the best in Japan' (*nihon ichi*) (Plate 6.1). Mr. Iida, a senior priest working at the Itsukushima Shrine, describes the procedure common for offering enlarged shamoji at the Senjōkaku. Usually, a group of people buys a big shamoji from one of the many souvenir shops on the island. The shamoji either has a standard wish written on it or the shopkeeper might be asked to inscribe a particular prayer. The name of the group and the date are also added in the shop. Then, after a short ceremony at the shrine, the scoop is offered in the Senjōkaku Sutra Hall. Shamoji on display are, for example, offered by the members of a hiking club, the players of a sports team, schoolmates and colleagues from work. The particular petitions written on shamoji are applicable to the whole group. Requests are mainly for strength in one's studies or one's occupation, for prosperity in business or victory in sports. It can easily be argued that these shamoji are modern versions of those used to capture the enemy during war. In short, previous prayers for victory in war were modified to the needs of people living in contemporary Japan. Before I continue discussing some of the contemporary contexts in which enlarged shamoji are commonly employed on the island, I want to stress a point, repeatedly made before, that, as clearly transpires from the example above, no clear-cut distinctions are made between shamoji sold at religious institutions and in souvenir shops on Miyajima. Shamoji in different sizes with similar wishes written on them are on sale at both locations. Enlarged shamoji acquired at commercial sites as well as at religious centres may be employed as offerings.

These days the magic of big shamoji on Miyajima is frequently linked with defeating rivals in sport and winning games. In the Miyajima History and Folklore Museum, a whole room is dedicated to the production and uses of shamoji on the island. Against the wall hang a range of enlarged

¹³ A detailed discussion of the exact historical relationship between shamoji and the military falls outside the scope of my thesis. According to Yanagita Kunio (1957), the custom of offering shamoji began during the Sino-Japanese War (1895-1896) when soldiers from all over Japan who gathered in nearby Hiroshima to await shipment to China visited the Senjōkaku Sutra Hall on Miyajima to pray for a safe return from the battlefield.



Plate 6.1: Enlarged shamoji with petitions are offered at the Senjokaku Sutra Hall on Miyajima.

shamoji with petitions written on them. On the head of one of these scoops, for example, the character for celebration is written in red ink followed by the text 'the winning school of the 63rd national high school baseball tournament' and all the names of the team members, their coaches, helpers and managers. The whole team offered this scoop on Miyajima after they won the prestigious, half-yearly organised, nation-wide broadcast, High School Baseball Tournament. The use of a shamoji with petitions after the wished for results are achieved resembles the way ex-voto operate in Christianity. Ex-voto are physical expressions of gratitude, left behind by devotees after their prayers have been heard. The range of votive images left behind at religious centres to thank God are diverse. There are, for example, realistic depictions of body parts such as wooden or waxed legs, but also figurative depictions of the event and the Divine intervention (McDannell, 1995: 152-3).

While conducting research about how shamoji are supposed to scoop victory, it was pointed out to me by several inhabitants of Miyajima that it is common in the larger Hiroshima region for baseball and soccer supporters to clap shamoji together to encourage their teams. While clapping shamoji together, the supporters not only make a lot of supportive noise, but through the noise they also give active expression or agency to the wish that their team will win. This example once more demonstrates the importance of homophonic associations in attributing power to objects. This time, it is the embodied sound *kachikachi*, an onomatopoeia used to describe the sound produced when two wooden objects are slapped together, which is thought to lead their team to win, in Japanese *katsu*.

Enlarged shamoji are also employed within the context of politics. During elections candidates may be given a big shamoji by their well-wishers. Mrs. Fujiwara, a female shopkeeper in her forties at the Hirokawa souvenir shop, pointed out that it is common for electioneers to present their favourite candidate with a big shamoji

to express admiration, but also because they believe the shamoji will aid in his appointment.

Election-shamoji are quite common on Miyajima and in the Hiroshima region, but the following example shows that this practice has also spread further a field. Prior to the elections of April 1999, several enlarged shamoji were ordered by telephone from the Miyachu shamoji wholesale company (see Chapter 5). On the 23rd of March, for example, an order for four giant victory shamoji was placed by the Matsushita Electricity Co-operative, a well-known company for

electrical appliances, located in Shiga Prefecture. Each of these shamoji cost thirty-thousand yen (150 pounds). In the middle of the head of the scoops, 'victory' was written in black ink under the text 'prayer' in red ink. On the left of this text, the name of the candidate and on the right the name of his party and the city were written. On the handle, Miyajima was stamped, but a paper talisman from the Itsukushima Shrine was pasted on top. Below the talisman, the name of the donator and the Miyachu trademark sticker were added. Finally, the date was written on the back of the head.

Tourists on Miyajima either leave enlarged shamoji with inscriptions behind as offerings or buy them as gifts for others. The local community uses oversized shamoji with text as signboards for businesses. We have already seen how large shamoji covered with the signatures of famous people are employed to attract people into souvenir shops (Chapters 4 and 5). Next, I will take a closer look at other applications for shamoji signboards. A large number of souvenir shops on Miyajima display a big shamoji, often with the shop's name written on it, above the entrance to their business. Similarly, some restaurants on the island employ shamoji advertisement boards. A local sushi restaurant, for example, has hung a large reclining shamoji signboard with sushi written on it on its facade. We saw in Chapter 2 that Mr. Kigami, the only local producer of enlarged shamoji, calls his products '*kanban* shamoji' or 'signboard shamoji'. *Kanban* are wooden or metal signboards that were first used as identity plates for businesses during the Tokugawa period.¹⁴ The catalogue of exhibitions devoted to Japanese signboards from the Tokugawa and Meiji period in the Peabody Museum in Salem in the US in 1983 reveals the great variety of *kanban* used (Burns O'Connor, 1983). Some *kanban* consist of enlarged objects related to products sold or services rendered in a shop. Examples are two enlarged radishes linked with a greengrocer, a giant watch used for a watch repair shop and two oversized wooden clogs displayed at a clog maker's shop. Plate 12 on page 43 in the same catalogue is of particular interest for my discussion because it depicts a giant shamoji that was used as a *kanban* for a restaurant that specialises in simple rice dishes. The word *meshi*, which means boiled rice but is also a generic term for a meal, is written in stylish calligraphy over the whole length of the big scoop (Sneider, 1983: 134). In contemporary urban Japan, neon lights and shop signs with colourful texts and graphics have largely replaced traditional *kanban*.¹⁵ However, some restaurants, traditional shops and inns continue to display gigantic *kanban* on their facade. In 1997, for example, I spotted a shamoji, similar to the one described above, hanging on the façade

¹⁴See Heal (1988) for a list of shop signs depicting enlarged objects, for example, a golden fan for fan makers or four coffins for an undertaker, which adorned the streets of London during the eighteenth century (Heal, 1988).

of a traditional Japanese restaurant in central Kyoto. Other examples are a huge brush hanging outside a brush shop in Nara City and a giant crab moving up and down the wall of a high-rise building which houses a famous crab restaurant in Osaka.

Not all *kanban* are explicitly linked with a particular product or service offered in the business concerned. *Maneki-kanban*, for instance, are particular signs or objects placed at the entrance of shops because they are thought to have the power to lure customers in. The verb *maneku* means to lure, to invite. This type of *kanban* is generally a representation of folklorist good fortune symbols. Common examples are the good luck god Fukusuke or the badger. However, these days, the most popular lucky omen for businesses is definitely the beckoning cat with one paw raised called *maneki neko*. This brings the discussion back to good luck charms. The *maneki neko* is a good example of an *engimono* that is not associated with one particular place. Images of beckoning cats produced in a range of different materials and sizes can be found in religious centres and commercial outlets throughout Japan. Cats are symbols of plenty, but the efficacy of the charm is partly grounded in its physical property. The raised paw invites luck into the shop. The *maneki-kanban* resembles *ōiri-kanban* or 'many people coming' boards (Sneider, 1983) that are given by well wishers at the opening of a business. Mr. Minato, an elderly shopkeeper on Miyajima island, claimed that big shamoji are frequently used to celebrate the opening of a shop, especially in the case of sushi restaurants. I argue that on Miyajima big shamoji signboards combine two functions of the traditional *kanban*. They are advertisement boards for shops, restaurants and other businesses, and at the same time they are good luck symbols that aim to lure customers. This dual function is illustrated well by the display of a large shamoji shaped advertisement promoting Hiroshima Jaken, a beer brewed in Hiroshima Prefecture that hangs in many shops and restaurants on Miyajima. These shamoji boards function, simultaneously, to advertise the beer and lure customers into buying it.

I want to pause here briefly and attempt to situate the case studies above within the body of research about the significance of size in Japanese society. Time and time again researchers, in Japan as well as abroad, have portrayed miniaturisation as a typical Japanese trait. A characteristic advocate of this discourse is the Korean researcher Lee (1982), who argues that the Japanese tendency for miniaturisation and reductionism has found its expression in multiple cultural forms such as bonsai trees, miniature dolls, and transistor radios and personal

¹⁵ Most modern co-operations have reduced their identity sign to a company badge.

computers. He argues that for Japanese people delicately crafted things reduced in scale are 'more charming, more powerful than their larger counterparts, and that there is something of a mysterious aura to them' (Lee, 1982: 20-1). I don't question the ubiquity of the miniature in Japanese society, but my case study urges us to take a more critical position concerning the stereotypical portrayal of the miniature as an embodiment of some kind of unique Japaneseness. Recently, the authors of *The Story of the Sony Walkman* (DuGay et al., 1997), for example, have critically accessed the link between miniaturisation and Japaneseness. They scrutinise the depiction of the walkman as a typical example of Japanese design because of its small size and doubt that miniaturisation and the aesthetics of simplicity should be seen as some kind of continuous essence in all Japanese design (DuGay et al. 1997: 70).

My study demonstrates that, although the topic has been largely ignored, the gigantic also plays a significant role in Japanese society. During the Tokugawa period, for example, what was considered excellent craftsmanship did not solely apply to miniaturisation and paying attention to minute detail. On the contrary, apparently, there was a real fascination with the gigantic as well. Markus's (1985) study of *misemono* spectacles, consisting of displays of the weird, the exotic and the wonderful which were held at religious institutions during this period provides evidence for this thesis. One category of object shown in *misemono* booths were examples of fancy craftsmanship. These crafts were either admired for their incredible detail or for their grandiose size. Eighteenth century examples of gigantic objects on display were a 159 feet high papier-mâché image of Vairo Buddha and a reclining 95-foot long Buddha made from basketry. Among the more secular, gigantic figures displayed were a giant toad and a tiger (Markus, 1985: 519-20). Interestingly, Markus also notes that from 1887 to 1890, a 108 feet high papier-mâché Mount Fuji towered above Asakusa in Tokyo (ibid.: 540-1).

According to the Japanese folklorist Kamino, there exists a long tradition of enlarging objects in Japan in order to 'stress that they differ from the material culture of the everyday and to show their ability to absorb or to fight supra-natural powers' (Kamino, 1989: 17). Gigantic objects were frequently used to scare away evil forces that could bring illness and disaster. Examples of this are gigantic straw sandals and giant sake cups placed at the entrance of some villages in Chiba prefecture. These objects were supposed to show that a frightful giant lives in the village and prevents potential evil forces from entering it (Hagiwara, 1988: 24). I do not want to play down the importance of miniaturisation in Japan, but I want to stress that multiple examples of

gigantification ranging from Sumo wrestlers to gigantic phalli also exist. This topic, therefore, certainly merits further research.

Returning to the shamoji, this section has provided evidence that the physical property linked with its agency is its shape. By changing the size of the shamoji shape, the local community on Miyajima was able to apply the power invested in it to modern conditions such as advertisement and business. Regardless of its size, the efficacy of the shamoji shape is grounded in embodied language closely linked with its everyday use as a kitchen utensil. An important issue that arises from the data presented is how we should understand that a mundane item of material culture employed in everyday bodily practices is invested with spiritual power. How does the materiality of functional items relate to their spiritual power? This question will guide the following discussion about the relationship between utility and the aesthetic or symbolic value of spiritual commodities.

6. Discussion: Materiality and Words, Utility and Aesthetic Value

The relationship between materiality and spirituality has been a source of controversy in many religions. Within Christianity, for example, the worship of icons is in conflict with the Divine commandment against graven images, but in practice material items have always played an important role in grasping the Divine. Successive religious leaders have attempted to address this contradiction. During the medieval period, for example, Thomas Aquinas defended religious images because they performed the following three functions: firstly, they were instruments to instruct the illiterate; secondly, they were repositories of the memory of the incarnation; and thirdly, they made the mystery accessible to the senses (Freedberg, 1989: 162-163). However, the material culture of Christian religion has also been repeatedly contested and successive waves of iconoclasm have erupted in Europe since the eighth century. During the Reformation of the sixteenth century, for instance, Protestant and purist iconoclasts in northern Europe attacked religious idols.¹⁶ Several studies have argued that the repeated destruction of religious images is actually grounded in a deep belief in their powers. This argument is supported by evidence about the way statues and other visual images are commonly desecrated. The fact that offensive religious images are often beheaded or defaced illustrates that these material forms were believed to be alive through mimesis of the human body (Kibbey, 1986: 42; Michalski, 1993: 96).

¹⁶Michalski (1993) argues that public acts of violence were just one aspect of the protests organised by iconoclasts. Often, images were gradually made powerless, for example by turning their faces towards the wall (Michalski, 1993: 75-98).

Protestantism offers an interesting example because it became known as a religion that developed in opposition to the material dimension of Catholicism. Language is considered the main tool of the Protestant fight against religious materialism. The policy of contemporary Protestant Missions, such as those among the Sumbanese Christians in Indonesia, indicates that language anchored in the intentionality of the individual is employed to combat local forms of materialism (Keane, 1998: 23-8). The stress is on worshipping 'The Word of God' but, in practice, Protestants all over the world frequently endow words with the qualities of things. Simon Coleman (1996) has pointed out how in the Protestant Word Movement in Sweden, sacred words are transformed into powerful vehicles of spiritual power through processes of objectification. Words are, for example, objectified in the body, the physical environment or the mass media (Coleman, 1996). Another example is given by Colleen McDannell who demonstrates that Protestants in the US highly value the Bible, a material object that is a source of memory and pious feeling (McDannell, 1995: 67-102).

Kibbey (Kibbey, 1986) has examined Protestant ideas about the materiality of religious objects. She points out that iconoclastic puritan activities during the Reformation have led many to the wrong conclusion that material shapes are considered insignificant in Protestant thought. She demonstrates, on the contrary, that John Calvin (1509-64) attached great importance to the material value of things. He argued that the falsely sacred could be re-appropriated by employing religious shapes worshipped for their aesthetic qualities in daily activities, for example by turning altar stones into kitchen sinks, (Kibbey, 1986: 42-50). Interestingly enough, Kibbey links Calvin's ideas with Marx's commodity fetishism. In her view, both thinkers express a concern about the fetishisation of objects because of the contradiction between the materiality of everyday used things and the (spiritual, exchange) value they acquire upon consecration or - in the case of the latter - circulation (Kibbey, 1986: 52).¹⁷ I will continue taking a closer look at Calvin's theory of iconoclastic materialism.

Calvin argues that material things can become the possessors of spirituality through the proper use of sacred words. He draws on the example of the bread of the sacrament to illustrate his point. In Catholic thought, the sacramental bread or wafer transforms into the body of Christ through metaphorical association grounded in visual resemblance. Calvin, in contrast, holds that the materiality of ordinary bread is a prerequisite for the mystery of the sacrament. Only daily

used bread can become spiritual food because the 'spiritual presence of Christ' is invoked in its materiality through the sounds of sacred words. By renaming the visual material object metonymically, for example through saying 'this is my body', the spiritual and the material temporarily fuse and the invisible Christ becomes present (Kibbey, 1986: 49-51). In summary, according to Calvin the materiality of the object and the sound of the words should be given similar importance within the process of religious embodiment. Hoover (2000) introduces us to a contemporary application of Calvin's theory of symbolism. He describes how mega-churches in the US actively manipulate or appropriate material symbols such as the cross during their services. He argues that the embodied use of the cross as a 'prop' is considered more meaningful than hanging it on the wall merely as a sign of something else (Hoover, 2000).

McDannell makes a similar point studying the retailing of Christian commodities in the US. Since the 1930s, sacred text from the scripture, religious mottoes and images have been printed on a great variety of material culture of every day life. A good example is the 1935 'spread-the-light' reading lamp with the text: 'The Lord is My Shepherd' and an image of Jesus printed on it (McDannell, 1995: 238). There seem to be no restrictions on the kind of objects appropriate for inscribing with scripture texts. Other examples given by McDannell are heat-resisting protection mats, thermometers, mirrors, and bookends (*ibid.*: 236). By way of comparison in the Egyptian case, introduced in Section 2, taboos apply to inscribing sacred words on certain kinds of objects such as items that come into contact with fire such as pots and pans (Starrett, 1995). Returning to Christian commodities, although any type of good can be imprinted with religious mottoes and images, a kind of authenticity was created through using only a limited number of images or texts. It follows that only a lamp with a particular image of Jesus was considered a Christian lamp (*ibid.* 240-42). Today, Christian goods range from Christian nightlights for babies, to T-shirts with shocking slogans such as 'Safe Sex? Wear a wedding Ring' for the under 30s and scripture cookies and tea for middle aged housewives. In short, 'Christian' has become a brand name imprinted on every item on sale from mundane, functional goods such as T-shirts, bumper stickers and pens to ephemera such as napkins or cookies (McDannell, 1995:260-1).

¹⁷ As I have pointed out in my introduction, Marx explicitly links capitalist thought with religion, but it remains unclear if he was aware of the existence of Calvin's theory of use value.

These Christian examples demonstrate that everyday use is not considered to profane the object nor the idea expressed in the text. Likewise, my study of kitchen utensils imprinted with sacred words in Japan shows that utility does not need to reduce the spirituality of objects. We have seen earlier that, in Shinto, utilitarian objects such as mirrors and swords are among the objects in which deities can reside (Chapter 1). Moreover, Buddhism teaches respect for all inanimate things. The shamoji offers a more extreme example because it demonstrates that the power of objects can actually be situated in their mundane application.

This chapter has shown that the power attributed to shamoji through homophonic association is grounded in the everyday embodied act of scooping rice. Thus, the mundane, domestic sphere of life, frequently perceived as insignificant, can play a major role in the creation of spiritual and social values. Shamoji double as tools to scoop rice and invite luck with. I have established that the main physical property of the shamoji related to its efficacy as a good luck charm is its shape. It follows that all shamoji-shapes can scoop luck regardless of the material they are made off and whether or not they are actually employed as kitchen utensils. Chapter 7 will critically assess this statement through a material culture analysis of the consumption of shamoji in the home. It will become clear that practices related to shamoji in the home are complex and multiple. The main point to remember from this chapter is that the distinction between the use and symbolic value of shamoji is blurred. They belong to a category of objects that are neither functional nor aesthetic. Thus, my Japanese case study, like the Christian examples discussed above, proves that the symbolic and functional, the spiritual and the material, the sacred and the profane or, in other words, the subject and the object world, are much more intertwined that has hitherto been thought.

Chapter 7 Souvenirs, Gifts and Good Luck Charms in the Japanese Home

1. Introduction: Discourse and Practice in the Home

Sections A and B have followed the shamoji throughout its various trajectories on Miyajima. I have, successively, discussed the ramifications of shamoji for different groups of people involved in its production, distribution, marketing and consumption on the Island. My study draws on other research about commodity chains, in particular Fine and Leopold's (1993) work which has followed one particular commodity through its vertical chain of provisioning, while looking at particular sets of economic and cultural processes involved in each phase of its biography. However, unlike this existing body of research, I have traced a commodity after its moment of purchase all the way into the domestic arena. Chapter 7 will consider the end consumption of shamoji in urban homes. The particular contribution of my research lies in the fact that it highlights the complexities, conflicts and compromises involved in the process of appropriation in the home.

My ethnography conducted in Japanese homes is a response to recent calls for consumption research in everyday spaces that looks at 'actual consumers, respecting their active role as creative agents before, during and after the moment of purchase' (Jackson and Thrift, 1995: 218). It aims to demonstrate that the significance of shamoji in the domestic arena is not a direct consequence of its production, distribution, retail or marketing. Consumption practices can not be solely derived from or reduced to a mirror of production. In his study of Coca-Cola in Trinidad, Daniel Miller (Miller, 1998b), for example, has clearly pointed at the complexity of both production and consumption contexts. It will emerge that the Miyajima shamoji takes on a quite different significance for consumers in the everyday practices in their homes.

During my fieldwork in people's homes, questions about the different uses and meanings of shamoji proved highly unsuccessful. Shamoji are mundane, taken for granted, objects that are rarely talked about. Similarly, most people in other countries would probably have no answers to questions such as why they fry their food with a certain ladle. Only after I prompted them would my informants provide their scoops with meanings. Most people drew distinctions between the shamoji in their homes based on the material they were made of. I was repeatedly told that wooden shamoji should be used for the preparation of traditional (*dentōteki*) or Japanese (*washoku*) dishes. A re-occurring example given was that rice used for sushi should be prepared

with a wooden shamoji in a specific wooden tub (*oke*) (Plate 7.1). These comments that link wooden shamoji with the 'Japanese' and the 'traditional' should be seen within the light of the public discourse about modernity in Japan. This discourse often takes the form of a 'Japanese' or 'wa' versus 'Western' or 'yō' dichotomy. Many elements of the material culture of everyday life in Japan are divided into these categories, for example, Japanese- (*wa-shitsu*) and western-style rooms (*yō-shitsu*) inside the house (Daniels, forthcoming) or Japanese- (*wa-fuku*) and western-style clothing (*yō-fuku*).

The Israeli anthropologist Ofra Goldstein-Gidoni (1997: 2001), has studied the production of these cultural categories. Her main argument is that both the 'Japanese' and the 'Western' are cultural constructs that are part of the ongoing construction and invention of a Japanese cultural identity. As such, the ambiguous mixture of Western and traditional-Japanese elements in Japanese wedding ceremonies, for instance, should be understood as a matter of styles and differences because, from a 'consumerist perspective, the Western and the traditional Japanese both contribute to the sense of Japaneseness' (Goldstein-Gidoni 1997: 9). Within the every day private sphere of the home, for example, people freely mix and adapt 'Japanese' and 'Western' elements. This mixture of styles is apparent in the use of carpets and beds on top of *tatami* mats in Japanese style rooms (Daniels, forthcoming).

Most important for my current discussion is the distinction made between Japanese- (*wa-shoku*) and western-style food (*yō-shoku*). The rhetoric demands that Japanese-style food is served in Japanese tableware and eaten with chopsticks according to Japanese table etiquette. Most people seem concerned to comply with these clear-cut distinctions in public - and wilfully inform the anthropologist about the strict rules involved -. Wooden shamoji are, through their function as rice scoops and their materiality, linked with ideas about Japaneseness and tradition. However, while living in people's homes, I experienced the discrepancy between discourse and practice first hand. The following case studies serve to elucidate some practices surrounding shamoji in contemporary Japanese homes.

2. Shamoji, Women and the Domestic: Case Studies

The majority of my informants in the Kinki region (Osaka, Kobe, Kyoto) belonged to the middle and upper middle class. I mainly engaged with women aged between thirty and sixty-five years who were full-time housewives. This group of women takes pride in taking care of their families as

mothers and food providers. They also play an active role in gift-exchange as representatives of their family. We have, for example, seen that groups of housewives purchase a large number of cheap souvenirs linked with the locality as gifts in souvenir shops on Miyajima (Chapter 4). In recent years' growing numbers of housewives have entered or re-entered the work force, mainly in part-time jobs, to supplement the family income¹ (McCreery, 2000: 249). However, as the anthropologist Allison rightly says in her discussion about the role of wives of white-collar workers in the home, 'even when the mother works outside the home, her role as mother is not reduced or replaced by that of the father' (Allison, 1994: 110). My first case study, the Mori's, a wealthy upper middle class family living in Itami City, north of Osaka, illustrates this point. Mrs. Mori is a full-time teacher in a local high school, while Mr. Mori is a pharmacist in a local hospital. Both are in their late forties. Keiko and Yoshiko, their two teenage daughters, live at home. They are a modern affectionate family and both parents contribute equally to the creation of their home. However, as in most homes, child care and food preparation remains an exclusively feminine task.

Mrs. Mori or one of the girls usually scoops rice from their two high-tech electric rice cookers with a plastic premium shamoji kept on the counter in a jar filled with water.² Occasionally, a 'high quality' (*tokujō*) shamoji made of mulberry wood with Miyajima written in calligraphy on the handle is employed. Mrs. Mori received this scoop as a farewell present at a hotel³ she stayed at on Miyajima a few years ago. The *tokujō* Miyajima shamoji is stored in a kitchen drawer, together with four flat, board-shaped shamoji. Another Miyajima shamoji with sketches of scenes of the Miyajima landscape and a cable car stamped on its head is still wrapped in plastic. This was a gift from fifteen year old Yoshiko who visited Miyajima on a school trip last year. One wooden and two bamboo shamoji are frequently used to stir food in the frying pan or to mix batter for making cakes. The wooden shamoji has 'Ise' stamped on the handle, while the two bamboo shamoji have printed on them 'Kirishima Shrine' and the additional inscription which means literally 'prolongation of life, longevity' (*enju*). Mrs. Mori told me that these shamoji are souvenirs from trips made by family members.

¹ Although divorce is on the increase in Japan, in Allison's view many women chose to stay with their husbands because women's wages are too low - and they decrease with age - to support a family (Allison, 1994: 108).

² The surface of plastic and wooden shamoji is commonly wet before use. This is said to prevent the rice from sticking to the scoop.

³ Most traditional inns and hotels in Japan offer customers a small present with the name and address of the business imprinted. These are usually small towels which guests can use when they take a bath or visit a hot spring in the evening (Hendry, 1995: 211-212).

There exists a strong historical correlation between shamoji, middle-aged women, rice and ideas of plenty in Japan. Folklorists such as Yanagita (1957), Takatori (1972) and Miyamoto (1973) have documented how the female head of household has played an important role in the labour force as well as in managing the household in pre-modern extended peasant families. The scoop with which the woman of the house would divide the precious rice among the family members became regarded as a symbol of feminine domestic knowledge⁴ and was, more generally, associated with women's role as care takers of the family.⁵ The relationship between shamoji and the traditional role of women as mothers and food providers remains strong in contemporary Japan. An advertisement for a new range of rice toppings, printed over a whole page in the Asahi Shinbun Newspaper in March 1999, for example, depicts a smiling middle-aged woman wearing an apron and holding a giant yellow plastic shamoji in both hands. The accompanying slogan reads: 'Saying delicious every day, I think that is amazing', 'always delicious, that is a Mother's plus point' (Plate 7.2). The Federation of Housewives, an organisation concerned with issues surrounding women and their families, has played an important role in popularising this image of the shamoji. Today the organisation publishes practical information about cooking, cleaning and child rearing and many members are active in the consumer movement. However, the organisation is best known for its symbolic protests against government policies concerning the everyday life of the family in post-war Japan. Especially memorable were their marches against high rice prices held in downtown Tokyo during the 1950s in which they carried around giant shamoji as slogan boards. These shamoji slogan boards have been the brand mark of the organisation ever since.

In the majority of homes studied, the housewife or one of her daughters would serve rice from electric rice cookers with a plastic shamoji. However, sometimes each family member would scoop their own rice. In the home of the Nishinaka family, tea farmers living in a rural area in northern Nara Prefecture, for example, a big rice cooker was placed on the kitchen counter to enable everybody, men and women, to scoop their own bowl of rice with a plastic shamoji. I am aware that the results of my research are influenced by my family-centred sample. I was not able to conduct extended

⁴In some parts of northern Japan, the female household head was called *heratori* or 'the person that holds the rice scoop' (Yanagita, 1957: 233).

⁵Since women had control over the consumption of rice in the house, and since rice was very precious for the continuation of the peasant household in pre-industrialised Japan, the fertility and power of women and the abundance of rice became symbolically related (Daniels, 1996).

research among the growing number of people who are not living in a family group, such as the elderly, divorced couples or single people in their twenties and thirties⁶. Many students or single working youths I encountered, for example, have lunch in the school or company cafeteria, while take-away meals were common in the evening. Other singles, of both genders, cooked and scooped their own rice from a single-person rice cooker.

The family Tanaka, my second case study, lives in Osaka City. Mrs. Tanaka is a full-time housewife in her early fifties who volunteers as a Japanese teacher at a local community Centre a few days a week. Mr. Tanaka is a staff member at a big company for electrical appliances. Their son, Kenji, recently left home because he started an administrative job at a major car manufacturing company in Nagoya City. Mrs. Tanaka only uses plastic shamoji in her kitchen. Two came free with their rice cookers, but two others she bought in a local hardware store. Both are produced by the Nakaya, the company that specialises in the production of plastic shamoji discussed in Chapter 2. In the Tanaka home, contrary to the statement made above, vinegar, rice and vegetables are mixed with two plastic scoops in a wooden tub to prepare *shirashizushi*, a so-called 'traditional' Japanese dish. In a kitchen drawer, Mrs. Tanaka keeps more scoops that she never uses including a bamboo shamoji with a sketch of a fox in front of some mountains and the text Hokkaido printed on it. This was a gift from a friend who went on her honeymoon to Hokkaido, Japan's northern most island. Another white earthenware shamoji, with a green and white striped pattern printed on its handle, is part of a series of kitchen utensils Mrs. Tanaka brought with her from her home on Shikoku Island when she got married. She explains that this scoop was frequently used at her home during her childhood, but now she just keeps it as a memory. This provides evidence for a point made earlier that, through their function as objects employed in everyday bodily routines, shamoji can become charged with memory, history and feelings. In another cupboard in the Tanaka's kitchen a seventy-centimetre long shamoji with Miyajima printed on its handle is kept. This shamoji, carefully wrapped and placed in its original gift box, is a souvenir from a friend who went on a trip to Miyajima.

One important point that emerged from my material culture analysis is that although most people use one or two plastic shamoji to serve rice with, they also have a large number of wooden - or bamboo - shamoji in their homes. Wooden shamoji are mainly employed for frying or mixing food

⁶John McCreery gives a detailed overview of the lifestyles of the growing number of single people in the 1980s and 1990s in Japan (McCreery, 2000: 140-50).

with if they are used at all. In most cases, wooden shamoji are, in my informants' words, 'just kept [in the kitchen]' or 'somehow, piling up [in the kitchen]' (Plate 7.3). The wooden shamoji, stored away in people's kitchen drawers, generally have texts or images printed on them. 'Miyajima' is ubiquitous. 'Ise' is another place name that frequently appears on shamoji. This place is strongly associated with Shinto ideology that stresses the link between rice and rice cultivation and Japaneseness. Shamoji connected with both these places were most common, but during my fieldwork I saw scoops referring to a variety of other places as well. Shamoji linked with mountains or mountain shrines were especially widespread. The family Murakami, my third case study, provides us with a rather extreme example of this association between shamoji and mountains.

The Murakami's, a typical middle-class family, live in Uji City, south of Kyoto. In this family, a blackened wooden shamoji is employed to scoop rice from the rice cooker. This scoop with the text Ōyama Shrine and the message 'the summit of Mount Tateyama'⁷ printed on it, was a souvenir from Mrs. Murakami's pilgrimage there. In a kitchen drawer, three more wooden shamoji with texts printed on them are kept. These have never been used. A white wooden shamoji from Ise and another one made of darker varnished wood from Mount Kurama, north of Kyoto, were souvenirs the daughters brought home from trips. The third shamoji has the text 'commemoration of climbing to the fifth [uphill] station [of Mount Fuji]' printed over the sketch of a mountain. I was told that grandfather Murakami had brought this shamoji home after he climbed Mount Fuji.

The texts printed on the Murakami's wooden shamoji refer to mountains, namely, Mount Tateyama, Mount Kurama and Mount Fuji. The Mori's in our first case study possess a shamoji from the Kirishima Shrine, a famous mountain shrine in Kyushu, while the family Tanaka has a bamboo shamoji from Hokkaido with mountains sketched on it. What is the connection between shamoji and mountains? Wood craftsmen used to live in the forest-covered mountains where they had easy access to wood used for their crafts. Interestingly enough, one group of these craftsmen specialised in the production of hollow scoops called *shakushi*, said to be the predecessor of the shamoji (Daniels, 1996: 18-20).⁸ More importantly, as we have seen in Chapter 1, the mountains

⁷Yama also means mountain in Japanese, but I chose to respect Japanese place names and have added the English 'Mount' for clarity.

⁸A detailed discussion of the history and folklore of these mountain people falls outside the scope of my Ph.D. research. However, I have paid attention to the customs and beliefs of wood craftsmen living in the mountains in my unpublished MA Thesis (Daniels, 1996: 11-4).



Plate 7.3: A typical kitchen drawer contains a range of plastic and wooden shamoji.

are a major place of worship in Shinto and Buddhism and many shrines and temples are located there. The names of mountains or mountain shrines printed on shamoji are embodied words that metaphorically link the scoops with the spirituality contained in these sacred places (Chapter 2). Thus, shamoji souvenirs with the names of mountains or mountain shrines imprinted on them can bring blessings from the mountains into the homes of urban Japanese.⁹ The link between shamoji and mountains will not feature any further here. For my current discussion suffice it to say that the majority of wooden shamoji in people's homes embody words associated with shrines and temples, and by extension other places considered to be imbued with spirituality, such as mountains. Moreover, my informants did not distinguish between a shamoji with the name or stamp of the religious institutions or just the place name or name of a mountain famous for a certain sanctuary printed on them.

The oversized shamoji kept in its wrapping inside a closet described in my second case study draws our attention to the presence of shamoji that are not supposed to be employed as kitchen utensils in the home. I want to stress that the mere presence of shamoji in the home does not mean they matter. The fact that Mrs. Tanaka does not display her oversized gift shamoji illustrates this. Next, we will see that the mechanisms through which shamoji end up in people's homes play a major role in determining whether or not a shamoji matters.

3. The Accumulation of Gifts in the Home

A point that clearly transpires from my fieldwork in the home is that the majority of shamoji, both plastic and wooden, are gifts. Plastic shamoji, generally, enter the home as free gifts that come with electric rice cookers. Similarly, the Tupperware Company made use of the gift economy to establish its position in the American consumer market during the 1940s and 50s. Tupperware was first distributed to American consumers as a gift or packaging for other commodities, such as cigarettes and cheese products (Clarke, 1999: 73). The plastic gift shamoji have clearly benefited from the widespread use of their wooden predecessors in the Japanese gift economy.

Wooden Miyajima shamoji, for example, were taken home as famous souvenirs to give to friends and relatives as early as the end of the eighteenth century. The rich folklore surrounding wooden

⁹ In contemporary Japan, urban populations can reach the mountains with ease. It is a popular travel destination where time might be spend hiking, fishing or skiing. However, visiting a mountain shrine or temple remains part of the experience. On returning home many visitors purchase produce from the mountains, mainly food and drink such as mountain vegetables, noodles, water or sake.

shamoji further highlights their role as gifts. We have seen that shamoji are regularly depicted in folktales as gifts from certain deities or powerful figures such as snakes or mice (Chapter 1 and 6). The act of giving a shamoji implies a generic wish of prosperity and good luck for the receiver. It used to be common, for example, to distribute shamoji among relatives and friends on auspicious occasions such as one's eighty-eighth birthday (Daniels, 1996: 33).¹⁰ Shamoji such as the shamoji Mrs. Mori received at a hotel on Miyajima also double as promotional material given to customers in the service industry. However, my data indicate that the majority of gift shamoji that enter people's homes are souvenirs from trips made by relatives or friends. These are mainly the flat board-shaped variety made of cheap wood and imprinted with the name of a place.

Souvenirs play an important role in gift exchange, a major aspect of social networking in Japan. The scale of the Japanese gift economy is overwhelming. There is an almost continuous flow of goods entering the home as gifts. The Moris are an example of a family highly involved in gift-exchange. During the mid-year gift-giving in January (*oseibo*) and July (*ochūgen*), for example, Mrs. Mori sends on average more than eighty gifts. She claims she prefers food items as gifts because they can be consumed by the whole family and leave no trace in the house. Instant or dry foods are more valued than fresh goods, because the latter turn bad much faster which causes problems during busy gift-giving periods when the family receives a surplus of items. Gift boxes with instant, dried or pickled foods are stored in a wooden closet in a small room next to the hallway. Mrs. Mori keeps a detailed list of gifts received and selects her return gifts with care. However, as Mrs. Tanaka from Osaka City introduced in Case Study 2 points out, many people receive a large number of similar goods. She suggests the following solution to this problem:

Well, you know, there are also gift vouchers for food. I think that because there are so many things to choose from these vouchers are excellent. It is because things are just piling up. You get, for example, only chicken or ham. There are also things you do not like.

Souvenirs are one kind of gift people receive in large quantities throughout the year. Again, most of my informants prefer to give and receive foodstuffs as souvenirs (see Chapter 4). A number of Japanese folklorists have investigated the fondness of the Japanese for foodstuffs in gift exchange. Kanzaki (1997), for example, pays particular attention to the ubiquitous sweet bean

¹⁰Today, this custom continues to exist in rural areas in southern Nara Prefecture. A person who becomes eighty-eight will distribute a shamoji with her/his name and 88 written on it to friends, family and neighbours.

cakes.¹¹ He traces their continuous popularity to the Japanese custom of exchanging food with the deities, which was afterwards divided and shared among the villagers. Several *manjû* wrapped and placed together in a box are considered appropriate souvenirs because they can be shared with others at home (Kanzaki, 1997: 196-9). Similarly, many of my informants claimed that they preferred to bring home a box of chocolates or other sweets because they consist of a number of individual items that can be shared at home.

Ito has critically assessed this Japanese food commensality model. He agrees that food is a major item of exchange in Japan, but he also points out that non-food gifts have been largely ignored in previous research about gift exchange (Ito, 1995: 92-100). I agree with Ito and my study also considers the role of non-food items in Japanese gift exchange. Returning to Mrs. Mori, her favourite gifts received from trips are food items. However, in this case, fresh food linked with the locality, such as a giant crab given by Mrs. Mori's sister who went to Hokkaido, are appreciated most. Mrs. Mori claims she generally also brings home food from her trips. However, during a recent trip to Australia, she purchased two dozen round cushions made of kangaroo skin with images of typical Australian animals printed on them. Two of these ended up in bamboo chairs in their Japanese style room, while the others were distributed among friends and relatives. I found that in the case that people chose to bring home things as souvenirs, these were often functional items such as cushions but also chopsticks, shamoji, ceramic vases or teapots. These kinds of souvenirs can be easily integrated in everyday routines.

Mr. Mori regularly brings teapots home from business trips as gifts for his wife, who adds them to her collection. Sophie Chevalier (1999) has shown that in France and Britain gifts from trips, similarly, may become part of a collection. These souvenir-gifts evoke the donor and the place where they were bought. They are normally purchased with the collection of the receiver in mind, and as a consequence the donor loses a certain degree of freedom (Chevalier, 1999: 510). I came across a number of people who purchased souvenirs for their own collections.¹² Mr. Nishimura, a forty-four year old doctor from Gifu displays in a glass case in his home more than 150 clay bells which he has collected while travelling in Japan. They are reminders of the places he visited (Pearce, 1995: 243-5), but they also are a source of pride and admiration. Though their

¹¹ They became the most common souvenir during the Meiji period (1868-1912) when faster railway transportation enabled people to take home raw foods.

¹² Martin points at the link between the development of mass tourism and the souvenir industry in England at the end of the nineteenth century and popular collecting (Martin, 1999: 27-28).

collections, people can demonstrate to others their extended social networks (ibid.: 369), but also that they have the time and money to travel widely. As such, these souvenirs become expressions of their understanding of 'approved' local products, their expertise in Japanese craft traditions and more generally their mastery of taste.

The durable qualities of gifts are valued by collectors, but most of my informants thought given things can place a burden on the receiver because he might feel obliged to use or display them. Mrs. Ogata, a forty-one year old music teacher living in Osaka City, explains why she thinks it is inappropriate to bring home durable objects:

In the case of things, afterwards, when you are back home, it is possible that you trouble people, don't you think? Well, people, for example, may feel they have to do something [use or display] it.

Elsewhere, I have pointed at the excess of small decorative items, souvenirs and family art in the interior of most Japanese homes. The large number of goods on display is closely associated with the extended cycle of gift-giving in contemporary Japan (Daniels, forthcoming).

The clutter of objects in homes studied materialises a range of internal and external relationships that constitute the family's identity. However, my data also indicate that the receivers of gifts, durable or ephemeral, are not passive recipients. I came across many informants who developed strategies to cope with the excess of gifts received. Again, the Mori family will serve as an example. The Mori's prefer food items, but they regularly receive disliked decorative gifts and souvenirs. These are rarely displayed in the home, but stored away, either in a built-in closet in their Japanese-style room, in a loft under the roof, or in a garden shed. This case study shows that the material culture of the Japanese home is not constant and stable. The objects inside the home are almost constantly in flow. This may be in the form of placing a disliked doll in the garden shed, bringing out a fan in summer, or replacing a painting of last year's zodiac animal, a rabbit, with a sketch of this year's dragon. Moreover, gifts may also be passed on. In Mrs. Mori's words:

it is difficult to get rid of a thing one receives but sometimes gifts are passed on to other people, for example to a friend who has many kids and who will appreciate it. Then I will say: 'I am terribly sorry, but this is only something I received'...

The accumulation of gifts in people's homes also discloses that certain gifts can not be disposed of easily. Mrs Murakami from Uji City introduced in Case Study 3, for example, explained to me that all wooden shamoji in her house are gifts from relatives who went on trips and therefore she finds it 'difficult to throw them away. We just keep them in the kitchen'. By comparison, plastic shamoji seem to be thrown away with ease. Carrier points at a similar dilemma that many people in Europe and northern America experience when presented with disliked gifts. In his view, the general reluctance to dispose of or even to exchange presents shows their inalienable character. The gift is intrinsically linked with the giver and the relationship between giver and receiver (Carrier, 1995: 26-7). In Japan, certain kinds of gifts seem to put an extra burden on the receiver because they need to be handled with care.¹³ Next, I will investigate deep-rooted ideas about the disposability of certain goods in contemporary Japan.

4. 101 Ways to Discard a Gift

We have seen that most gift shamoji have texts printed on them associated with temples, shrines or other places imbued with spiritual power. Like other objects distributed at religious centres such as the hugely popular protective brocaded pouches, called *omamori*,¹⁴ their power normally lasts for one year or until the fulfilment of a wish or favour. Ideally old items should be returned to temples and shrines – not necessarily the same place as where they were purchased - so they can be ritually disposed of. On the grounds of most shrines and temples there is a designated spot where amulets, protective charms or other goods which are believed to need special care such as dolls are collected throughout the year. These returned objects are ritually cleansed¹⁵ at regular intervals. At the Daishōin Temple on Miyajima, for instance, collected items are burnt once a month in a ritual fire while priests chant prayers. Many shrines and temples organise a special ceremony called *dondōyaki* on the fifteenth of January in which old goods and New Year's decorations are ritually burned. At the Kasuga Grand Shrine in Nara City, for example, shamoji as well as votive offering tablets are burned on this day. The sales of cheap mobile objects such as protective amulets and good luck charms are a significant source of income for religious institutions throughout the year. However, profits are the biggest during the New Year's period when many people exchange old auspicious items for new ones.

¹³Temples all over Japan regularly organise memorial services for dolls. Dolls are collected and burned with proper respect in a special ceremony.

¹⁴The term *omamori* comes from the verb *mamoru* to protect. These personal charms carried close to the body contain a sacred text and have written on them the name of a certain deity or shrine where they were purchased and wishes such as 'to pass entrance examinations'. *Omamori* are personal charms commonly carried close to the body, for example attached to a school bag.

The above description indicates that objects distributed at religious institutions, that have been invested with power during special sacralisation ceremonies, need to be disposed of in a proper way. However, commercially produced and distributed commodities may also need to be treated with special care. Of particular interest for my study are Buddhist memorial services (*kuyō*) held for old tools. Famous examples are memorial services for needles, brushes and dolls. *Kuyō* rites, generally, refer to offerings carried out on behalf of the deceased.¹⁵ The fact that purification rituals are conducted for objects reveals a particular attitude towards the inanimate world grounded in native folk beliefs and Buddhist thought. Buddhism teaches that all life forms, not only humans and animals but also plants and objects, should be treated with respect because they all have the potential to reach Buddhahood. According to Japanese folk traditions, all things are considered to have a soul (Kretschmer, 2000; 145-8). We have, for example, seen in Chapter 1 that material objects can be the temporary residence of spirits.

I have discussed how neither Shinto nor Buddhism propagates an anti-materialist ideology (see Chapter 1). However, the concern with old utensils certainly hints at certain anxieties against conspicuous consumption and waste. These ideas have deep roots in the political economy of Early Modern Japan. Memorial services for tools were introduced during the Muromachi Period (sixteenth century), at a time when a general increase in productivity made a broader range of goods available to the masses¹⁷ (Komatsu, 1994: 339). Agricultural innovations and the development of an efficient craft-industry eventually resulted in a long period of economic growth during the 17th and 18th centuries. This in turn led to the development of a consumer culture with relatively high levels of well being for all levels of the population. Tokugawa Japan (1600-1868) was a highly segregated society with four official classes and categories of people were closely linked with types of objects. In Hanley's opinion, this was a consumer society that made efficient use of scarce resources. The stress was on the quality rather than on the quantity of goods (Hanley, 1997:15-9). However, the fact that the Tokugawa State imposed Sumptuary Laws that

¹⁵ These consist of cleaning with water or fire or ritual burying in an earthen mound.

¹⁶ Kretschmer (2000) defines three different groups of *kuyō* services, namely, for humans, for aborted fetuses and for animals, plant and objects.

¹⁷ A scroll from the sixteenth century depicts shamoji among *tsukumogami*, evil utensil ghosts. This phenomenon is by no means typical of Japanese; similar examples can be found in China, and the Flemish Painters Bosch and Breugel, also depicted animated objects in their work.

propagated saving and frugality, whether or not with success, suggests that the increase in the level of wealth, especially of the merchant and artisan class, also resulted in uncontrolled forms of consumption.¹⁸

At the end of the nineteenth century, the feudal system was abolished and the government embarked on an ambitious modernisation project that stressed economic growth with little concern about waste and the environment. Contemporary Japanese have been strongly criticised for their lax attitude towards waste. Clammer, for example, argues that a general attraction to new things goes hand in hand with a rapid disposal of functional items (Clammer, 1997: 24). This might be true of fashion items, electrical equipment and appliances, but my data about the Japanese home shows that a considerable number of objects is treated in quite a different way. I feel more at ease with Moeran and Skov's view that we can distinguish a 'number of different overlapping rhythms, with the quicker ones indicating fast-changing 'fashion items' ... and the slower ones a 'consumption of tradition' (Moeran and Skov, 1997: 200-1). *Engimono* are not dictated by fashion. They are consumed at a slower rhythm, but they are to be renewed and changed regularly nevertheless.

Returning to the ceremonies for old tools, during the 1970s and 80s a range of new ceremonies focused on modern items of material culture, such as glasses and contact lenses, shoes, clocks, business cards and so forth and so on. How are we to understand that memorial services for old goods continue to be organised in a contemporary industrialist society like Japan? In the past the ceremonies for tools were initiated by local groups of consumers who affiliated with a certain temple. The initiative for the organisation of most new forms of *dōgu kuyō*, on the other hand, is mainly taken by commercial enterprises - or rather certain individuals within them. The ceremonies mainly aim to enable producers, distributors or service providers associated with the object concerned to express thanks for financial success, and to network with colleagues and advertise their product. Most ceremonies are lively spectacles that offer participants venues for human interaction. It is a forum for relationship-building among people in a certain industry but also between producers and consumers. The *kuyō* rites clearly show that lay people play an active

¹⁸ For an Asian comparison, see Clunas's discussion of the attitude of the state in Ming China to uncontrolled consumption (Clunas, 1991: 141-59)

role in shaping religious life in Japan. It also shows that religious activities can be incorporated into all spheres of life (Chapter 1).

Observations at religious institutions all over Japan indicate that these days a significant number of old objects, such as magic arrows, protective tablets and dolls, continue to be collected. The special bins provided by religious institutions during the New Year are generally filled to the brim. On Miyajima, a considerable number of people exchange old shamoji for new ones at the Itsukushima Shrine during the New Year. Because the lives of most inhabitants of Miyajima are closely intertwined with aspects of the production and distribution of shamoji, they are more likely to attach special meanings to the products of their labour. However, it is clear that not everybody on the island returns goods to temples and shrines. Individual degrees of involvement vary immensely and the following example urges us to be cautious about making sweeping generalisations.

Mrs. Takahashi, a woman in her forties with two grown-up children and who works part-time in a local food store, told me that she never returns the New Year's shamoji with zodiac animals she receives each year from the Itsukushima Shrine. Miki, her twenty-year-old daughter who went to study in Australia for a few months, took these shamoji as gifts for her home stay family and school friends. The two Miyazato daughters, both in their late thirties, unmarried and living on Miyajima provide us with another example that questions the above statement. Both girls have a very different attitude towards the material culture of luck displayed in their home. Naoko, the youngest, believes that because objects from temples and shrines are very valuable they should be handled with great care. Kaori claimed she did not see any problem in dumping them in the bin. Generally, both girls exhibit quite different tastes. Naoko is a highly educated professional who lived for twelve years in Tokyo. She is knowledgeable about traditional customs and likes Japanese aesthetics. Kaori has always lived on the island and works part-time for Amway. She is well informed about the latest trends and fashions through women's magazines, television and a large network of friends. For this woman, traditional Japaneseness is not particularly attractive. It is often the source of conflict and tension with her parents.

The bin is one option to dispose of shamoji, but quite a number of the people I met were eager to pass them on. One evening, while I discussed my research with the family Nishinaka in Nara Prefecture, the elderly Mrs. Nishinaka dug up a wooden shamoji from a chest of drawers in the

dining area. On the head of this scoop was written eighty-eight years and on the handle a name. This was a gift from a female villager who turned had eighty-eight years old. I was told that this shamoji was a protective charm against evil that people used to put above the entrance of their houses, but somehow the Nishinaka's couldn't be bothered and it had ended up in a drawer instead. I had a similar experience at the home of Mrs. Fujimoto, a full-time housewife in her forties, living in Asuka village in southern Nara Prefecture. When I inquired after her use of shamoji, she disappeared briefly to return with a bag full of shamoji. Mrs. Fujimoto told me that these were souvenirs but also talismans which she had received over the years from neighbours and family members. Some of these were Miyajima shamoji. These shamoji were traditionally placed above the doorway but somehow they never came round to it. In the end, these shamoji were just piled up in their storage space. Mrs. Fujimoto claimed she was happy she had found someone to take care of them. I had the same experience over and over again. Often when people learned about my shamoji research, I ended up going home with their excess shamoji.

During frequent trips to temple markets in Kyoto¹⁹ I observed that shamoji, as well as many of the other items discussed above, may also start a second life as antiques, folk crafts or just exotic goods popular with foreign tourists²⁰ (Kopytoff, 1986). Miyajima shamoji repeatedly surfaced, but among my discoveries were also other good luck charms, such as the cat with the raised paw beckoning prosperity into businesses (Plate 7.4), clay bells and figurines of devils to ward off evil, and statues, and functional objects depicting animals of the zodiac. Re-occurring features at almost every stand were dolls in a multitude of sizes and shapes. According to stall owners, and in compliance with my own observations, foreigners almost exclusively buy these dolls. Riikka, a Finnish researcher in her thirties, for example, displays an impressive collection of Japanese dolls found over the years in temple markets in her hometown Kyoto.

Dolls are one category of object that needs to be handled with care and a number of temples throughout Japan organise *kuyō* rites where people can dispose of old or unwanted dolls.²¹ In most houses studied a number of dolls were displayed in glass cases. Like shamoji, these are items that commonly enter the house as gifts. The Miyazato's display five dolls in glass cases in

¹⁹In Kyoto, temple markets are held monthly on the 21st at the Kitano Tenmangu Temple and on the 25th at the Toji Temple.

²⁰Temple markets, a major tourist attraction in Kyoto, are widely advertised in English language guide books and other sources of information available for foreigners.

their home, while more are kept in a storage room at the back of the house. Mrs. Miyazato pointed out that she likes some of these dolls, but more often these kinds of gifts cause distress. She explains:

I am troubled because one cannot throw dolls away. I have no other place to put them, so I just have to put them there, well. I have no other option.

This quote confirms the point made earlier about the importance of the availability of storage space in people's homes. It also reveals the hazards posed by certain objects. Many other informants expressed a similar concern about the difficulty involved in disposing of items such as dolls and shamoji. The pressures and obligations felt indicate that these objects have an agency that is not reducible to the intentionality of people. The shamoji and dolls are prime examples of how things can oblige people to act in a certain way. I will return to this topic in Section 6.

The display of shamoji in certain places in the home may show that they are considered to be significant domestic items. I will continue looking at some of the spatial mechanisms at work in Japanese homes.

5. The Locus of the Spiritual in the Domestic

In Japan, two spaces in the home are traditionally associated with the domestic religious cult. The *kamidana*, literally god shelf, is a small Shinto altar where the protective deities of the house and its inhabitants are worshipped. The *butsudan*, a Buddhist house altar, is dedicated to Buddhas, ancestors and the spirits of the recently dead. Rituals in front of home altars are mainly performed by women (Martinez, 1995: 189).²² Similar examples can be found in many other societies. Hirschon, for example, demonstrates how the Greek *Iconostasi* or shelf for icons and other sacred objects is the responsibility of the woman of the house (Hirschon, 1993: 81). A recent book by the folklorist Kay Turner explores the contemporary relationship between American women from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds, spirituality and house altars (Turner, 1999). The main duty of women responsible for the Japanese house altar consists of the preparation of food and drink offerings. Many commentators talk about daily offerings, but my fieldwork suggests that attention paid to these altars depends on the personal commitment of

²¹The Japanese word for doll *ningyô* means human shape. Dolls are representations of humans and in Japan, as in many other cultural contexts, they have a long history of being employed as substitutes for people in rituals.

individual housewives. I will not expand any further on the link between women and spirituality here. Instead, I would like to turn to the material culture of the house altar.

I have chosen to focus on the *kamidana* because the display on the god shelves generally centres around the themes of wealth, plenty and good fortune for the house and its inhabitants. In particular, during the New Year period the *kamidana* becomes the focus of people's attention. The standard *kamidana* consists of a flat wooden board used as a shelf on which a wooden miniature Shinto shrine is placed. Inside is placed a rectangular piece of white paper or wood called *ofuda* with the name of the deity and/or the shrine of its origin written on it.²³ In front of the shrine there are two ceramic containers, one for offering water and the other for sake. A miniature Shinto entrance gate with a sacred rope of straw, decorated with a few white streamers demarcates the sacred space. Next to the *torii* are two white glazed vases with evergreen *sakaki* leaves and two miniature guardian lions. This is the typical outlook of a *kamidana*, but as the following description will show, the shelves can differ greatly in the detail of their content. Moreover, objects are added and removed throughout the year.

The Miyazato family, an above-average, quite wealthy family, lives on Miyajima in their family house which is more than a one hundred years old. Sixty-seven year old Mr. Miyazato is the president of Miyachū, the shamoji wholesale company discussed in great detail in Chapter 2. In the Miyazato's dining-kitchen area, two metres high on the wall above the door hangs a *kamidana*. Mrs. Miyazato, a full-time housewife in her early sixties, tends to the god shelf.²⁴ Three objects have been added to this *kamidana*. Firstly, a shamoji with a picture of a rabbit and the text 'improvement of one's fortune' imprinted.²⁵ These shamoji with the image of a zodiac animal are produced each year by Miyachū. During the New Year's period, they are for sale in souvenir shops on the island. They can also be ordered through the Miyachu product catalogue distributed nation-wide. Later in the year, the same shamoji are given as small business gifts to people who, in Mr. Miyazato's words, the company is in debt to. A second object placed on the

²² Martinez argues that young wives are responsible for the daily offerings to the Shinto deities, while the older women in the household tend to the ancestors in the Buddhist altar (Martinez, 1995: 189).

²³ Frequently, several *ofuda* are placed together on the *kamidana*. Statues or printed images of deities might be enshrined as well.

²⁴ Generally, her worship does not extend beyond placing some water in front of the enshrined *ofuda* from the Itsukushima Shrine. The evergreen *sakaki* leaves are replaced every two weeks.

²⁵ 1999 was the year of the rabbit. The twelve year zodiac cycle of Buddhism (*jūni-shi*), based on series of animal signs, was introduced from China. In contemporary Japan three calendars co-exist: the agrarian calendar, the old lunar-solar Chinese calendar and the modern Gregorian calendar. See Caillet for more information about the Japanese ritual year (Caillet, 1998).

Miyazato's *kamidana* is a magic arrow. This is a popular New Year's *engimono* against evil that many Japanese bring home when they make their first visit of the year to a Shrine. The Miyazatos got theirs at the Itsukushima Shrine. In the middle of the shelf stands a wooden conical object called *otama*, the seed of life.²⁶ Mr. Miyazato received this object from the Itsukushima Shrine as a commemorative gift when he participated in a local Shinto festival.

All three objects are *engimono*. They exemplify the main characteristics of the material culture of luck. Firstly, through their particular physical qualities they are able to invite good luck or to drive away evil. The arrow shoots evil, the seed of life grows luck, while the shamoji scoops it. Secondly, two of the objects concerned were distributed during the New Year's period and the other during an annual festival, which hints at their temporal character. Thirdly, the arrow and the seed of life were acquired at the local shrine while the shamoji are produced by the Miyachu family business. In short, the material culture of luck is sold at religious centres but also distributed by commercial enterprises.

Most houses on Miyajima possess a *kamidana*, but I think it is correct to say that god shelves as well as *butsudan* are increasingly becoming a rarity in contemporary Japan.²⁷ The eclectic material culture of good luck can be found in a multitude of loci in the Japanese house. Next, I will have a closer look at some of these places. These days, the top of the TV frequently functions as a display area for good luck charms. As a matter of fact, the centrality of the TV²⁸, which doubles as a display area, can be witnessed in homes all around the world. In recent studies about the interior decoration of the home in France and England (Chevalier, 1995: 30) and in New Jersey New York (Halle, 1993) the TV, for example, features as a display area for photographs of loved ones. The literature about home altars also pays attention to the TV. Turner, for example, introduces us to an Italian grandmother who made a home altar for her deceased son on top of

²⁶ Conical objects called *tama* are frequently used during Shinto festivals. They function as a temporary place of descent of a deity or as an object to summon the presence of a certain deity (*torimono*) during a dance (Nihon Mingu Jiten, 1997: 336).

²⁷ At the moment, this trend is more pronounced in urban areas, although I found that an increasing number of houses in the countryside no longer contain a *kamidana* either.

²⁸ In a forthcoming article about the material culture of the Japanese home, I have discussed the central position of the TV in many people's lives. In the home of one family discussed, for example, each room is equipped with a wide screen TV and video (Daniels, forthcoming). Kelly discusses how the television instead of the decorative alcove became the focal point in the main room in rural homes (Kelly, 1992: 84). Brian Moeran gives a detailed account of the history of the television and the growth of television networks in Japan (Moeran, 1996: 12-15).

the TV (Turner, 1999: 85), while many of Dana Salvo's photographs of Mexican home altars depict TVs with a range of objects on top placed close to the altar (Salvo, 1997).

Returning to the Japanese case, generally, the TV has taken over the role of the *kamidana* as the focal point in the main living space. In the Miyazato's home, the TV display is situated in the same room as the *kamidana*. What first draws one's attention is the pervasive presence of images of rabbits (Plate 7.5). Firstly, the image of a rabbit is printed on a square wooden measurement (*masu*) traditionally used to weigh the uncooked rice with. This is another business gift produced by Miyachū. Next to this object stands, in front of a small golden folding screen with the character for rabbit on it, a white rabbit made of soap with the Chinese character for *fuku*, one of the terms for good fortune discussed above, printed on it. This small gift the family received from their local make-up store during the New Year period. According to Mrs. Miyazato this is an expression of the shop's feeling of gratitude towards their customers. The third object is a pair of clay bells that depict a male and female rabbit. This is a New Year gift from the Daishōin Temple. Next to this display stands a small wooden board with the inscription '*kaiun*' (to open up to *un* or to invite good luck), 'the Daishōin Temple' and the official stamp of the temple. Mr. Miyazato argues that all the above objects, - even the ones not from a shrine or temple, can be called '*engimono*' because they depict 'the zodiac animal that will be auspicious for that year.' This provides evidence for my thesis that no distinction is made between things from religious institutions and commercial enterprises. Moreover, in the Miyazato household similar objects are displayed on the *kamidana* and on the TV. I will continue looking at two other important loci of the spiritual in the Japanese home, namely the hallway and the decorative alcove (*tokonoma*).

Another place where *engimono* are often displayed is in the hallway. The Moris, for example, hung two talisman from the Nishinomiya Shrine in Kobe in the hallway of their urban model home. A big bamboo rake (*kumade*), with brightly coloured plastic objects associated with prosperity such as a mask of the deity Ebisu attached, is supposed to rake up good fortune for Mr. Mori's business. The other object is a paper talisman to pray that the eldest daughter, Keiko, will pass her entrance exams for university. Mrs. Mori explains that both charms were hung in the hallway because it faces the east, the inauspicious side of the house.²⁹ Most religious institutions distribute special protective charms against evil, but objects in the shape of devils or zodiac

²⁹The hallway and the entrance of the house is believed to be a transient space which need to be purified and protected. These beliefs still transpire in the set of geomancy rules applied in contemporary house construction (Jeremy and Robinson, 1989: 132).



Plate 7.4: Shamoji are among items that begin a second life at a temple market in Kyoto in 1997.



Plate 7.5: A TV displayed with good luck charms repeating the rabbit motif.

animals might be placed at the entrance to drive away evil as well. In Hiroshima City, in the hallway of the Family Ishida, for example, hangs a Miyajima shamoji with the inscription '*safety in the home*'. The family Murakami in Uji City, Kyoto, displayed the following set of objects on top of the shoe closet in the hallway: three wooden boards with decorative carvings and a mask of a devil made by grandfather are placed next to a ceramic statue of a rabbit, a small gift from their sake shop. Finally, a pair of male and female dolls for the Doll festival in March and some branches of plum blossoms in a vase are seasonal objects.

The Murakami case study demonstrates that objects received during the New Year period are not the only items of material culture displayed in the home and linked with the cyclical notion of time. A range of other objects are associated with seasonality. Material culture linked with the annual cycle of festivals, for example, also appears in the decor. The most common example of this practice is a formal display shelf of dolls and their miniature utensils (*hinadana*) put up in houses where unmarried girls live during the Doll festival in the month of March. Moeran has pointed out that the seasons and nature in general are also linked with tradition to promote an image of 'Japaneseness' (Moeran, 1995: 121-2).³⁰ The frequently-changed elaborate flower arrangements in the Japanese style room in the Mori's home, for example, expresses a certain sophistication and taste linked with ideas of Japaneseness.

Traditionally, the objects displayed in the decorative alcove (*tokonoma*) such as a hanging scroll were changed according to the season. This is another space in the home where *engimono* might be displayed. The *tokonoma*, one of the main style elements of the idealised dwelling of the pre-modern Tokugawa elite, is a display area that originally contained one or more scrolls and a vase, an incense burner and a candleholder. Many contemporary Japanese homes have a token Japanese-style room with a *tokonoma*. The content of these alcoves varies greatly, but instead of a neat minimalist display I generally found a cluttered space filled with a mixture of gifts, heirlooms and hand-made objects that embody the family's identity (Daniels, forthcoming). In the Mori's *tokonoma*, objects made by family members surround two magic arrows from a local shrine and two dolls received as gifts. In the Miyazato's *tokonoma*, the focus is on inherited objects and formal gifts. A scroll, a Buddhist statue, a table and an incense burner were gifts from a local temple, while a statue of the popular good luck Deity Ebisu was inherited. A one metre twenty

³⁰ Commodification of nature linked with life cycle events is taken further in Japan than in Europe and the United States. In advertisements, seasonality is used to promote a myriad of commodities such as food and cosmetics, and also ceramics and diamonds. (Moeran, 1995: 123).

long shamoji, made of expensive wood with scenes from the Miyajima landscapes engraved, stands in one corner. This is an inherited object linked with the family's shamoji wholesale business. The shamoji is inscribed with family history and objectifies values of tradition and transcendence.

I discovered another of these over-sized shamoji in the *tokonoma* of the Nishinaka family who operate a tea farm in rural Nara Prefecture. When their son, Ken, married, the elderly Nishinaka couple added a prefabricated section to their house. The dining-kitchen, the central living space in the home, is located in the new part of the house. On the first floor in the older part of the building there are two Japanese style rooms with carved wood work and decorated sliding doors. These rooms are rarely used, but they are crammed with objects that are part of sixty-six year old Mr. Nishinaka's collection of traditional Japanese objects and antiques. In the *tokonoma* of one of these rooms, rest two big earthenware pots, a vase with silk flowers and, of special interest for our discussion, a one metre twenty long shamoji with the Miyajima stamp branded into its handle. The words 'prosperity', 'gift' and 'Hiroshima rowing club' are written on this shamoji. Mr. Nakanishi explained that a few years earlier there had been a big rowing tournament in the region and the whole team from Hiroshima Prefecture ended up staying in their house. The team gave them this shamoji as a present to wish them prosperity in their tea business. By placing the good luck charm in the *tokonoma*, it became part of a whole set of objects that objectify tradition and Japaneseness.

On Miyajima Island, a large number of people display shamoji in their homes. They are, for example, placed on god shelves, on the TV, in the hallway and in the *tokonoma*. Although shamoji may end up in any of the above places, the majority of Miyajima shamoji in the urban homes I studied in the Kansai area were stored together with many others in the kitchen. This provides evidence for the thesis that proximity to the place of production and distribution of shamoji may lead to the scoops being invested with significance that may be lost in homes further away. My study also indicates that within the domestic arena in urban homes, the meanings and practices surrounding the shamoji become more complex and diverse.

6. Discussion: Complexities and Contradictions of Domestic Appropriation

Lupton argues correctly that the home is 'a world in which a person can create a material environment that embodies what he or she considers significant' (Lupton, 1998: 158). However, as I have shown elsewhere, the material culture of the home also embodies the contradictions and tensions of inter-family relations. The cluttered interiors of many Japanese homes reflect the complexities of informal and formal social relationships (Daniels, forthcoming). The accumulation of things contained in time and space is both a social and material unit positioned between interrelating processes of appropriation and alienation in the home (Attfield, 2000: 157). As such, the home should be seen as a dynamic entity. People may use the house and its material content as instruments of change and identity creation, but through its materiality the home also influences the lives of its inhabitants (Miller, forthcoming).

The majority of shamoji enter the Japanese home as gifts. These shamoji are embodiments of wishes of plenty. The accumulation of scoops may, therefore, point at the extended social networks of its inhabitants. However, the large number of scoops also reveals the strains of relationships and the weight of reciprocity of the Japanese gift economy. Shamoji are indexical links that mediate between people and their deities. In folktales they are often portrayed as gifts from the deities. Moreover, it is common practice, especially during the New Year, for both religious institutions and commercial enterprises to consolidate their relationships with, respectively, devotees and clients by presenting them with *engimono*. The Itsukushima Shrine hands out more than ten thousand New Year's shamoji to visitors. Miyachū, the shamoji wholesale company based on Miyajima, distributes free New Year's shamoji imprinted with animals of the zodiac. Likewise many other commercial venues present their customers with small decorative or functional items linked with zodiac animals. Examples I encountered during fieldwork are a small ceramic statue in the shape of a rooster that doubles as a toothpick holder given to the family Murakami in Kyoto by their insurance company and an earthenware cow container filled with sake which the Mori's in Osaka received from a local sake shop.

Shamoji regularly function as free gifts with other purchases. Most prevalent is the plastic shamoji that comes for free with every rice cooker purchased. Another example of token shamoji is a plastic shamoji given to people who did not win a prize in a lottery draw during a festival in a shopping arcade in downtown Tokyo in July 1995. Another is a wooden shamoji presented to

subscribers to a nation-wide post office scheme that involved regular deliveries of bags of rice from northern Japan in 1997. Finally, the last group of shamoji that enters the home as gifts consists of large numbers of wooden shamoji imprinted with names of temples and shrines or other tourist destinations, primarily places located in the mountains. They are gifts that relatives and friends bring home from their travels. Some of them may be received as part of a formal religious experience. However, the majority are linked with a more domestic, every day form of spirituality. They are tools that can help to invite luck into the home.

The accrual of gift shamoji in people's homes relates back to my discussion about agency, exchange and interdependency in eastern Indonesia in Chapter 6. For the Anakalangeses, gifts are supposed to bring good fortune and to reject them is insulting to the donor and has consequences for one's *dewa* (Keane, 1997: 205-6). As one informant puts it:

If we push away good fortune, it's not a fellow human whom we push away, but God. So He withdraws his support. We have to foster (our good fortune) (Keane, 1997: 205)

Similarly, in my Japanese case studies the pressures, obligations and ambivalences of exchange are apparent. Most people feel reluctant to push away gifts, especially *engimono* that imply a wish for good fortune. Engimono should be treated with care because they have the potential of bringing about bad luck for the humans concerned. This explains why some people bring these objects to religious institutions where they can be dealt with in a proper way. Kretschmer has summarised the main motivations for the contemporary *kuyō* memorial rites for objects, discussed above, as an expression of gratitude, animistic beliefs, a forum to meet colleagues, the possibility for product advertisements, a revival of Japanese heritage, and, most important for my discussion a desire 'to do the proper thing,' based on the recognition that all things are interrelated (Kretschmer, 2000: 333-4). The interdependency between people, and between people and other entities that are not necessarily human is a central thought in Buddhism. Taoism and Confucianism similarly stress the importance of inter-relatedness. In all three lines of thought the individual is considered to be one element of 'a closely textured web which transcends time and space' (ibid.: 334). This view comes close to Latour's (1993) theory about networks of agents that includes animated and inanimate forms.

The importance attached to the seasonality of *engimono* further illustrates that they have a certain independent agency. People are the instruments for the continuous circulation of things. The

power of *engimono* is thought to weaken over time and, in theory, they should be regularly returned to religious institutions where they are ritually disposed off. However, in practice, the flow of objects between religious centres and urban homes is frequently blocked. A large number of items never make it back. Many of my informants have developed alternative strategies to deal with the never-ending stream of goods that enter the home. Shamoji may be sold with a range of other souvenirs, gifts and bric-a-brac at a garage sale or they may become antiques at a local temple market. Some are passed on to children when they start living on their own or they are turned into exotic Japanese gifts given to foreign guests. Others may be turned into garden tools or toys for the dog or they may even come in handy to clean oil from a polluted beach, while others finally end up in the bin.

One of the main arguments put forward in the Chapter 6 was that shamoji belong to a category of objects that do not fit any strict division between utility and aesthetic qualities. I have established that the physical property of the shamoji related to its efficacy as a good luck charm is its shape. All shamoji-shapes can scoop luck or plenty regardless of the material they are made of and whether or not they are actually employed as kitchen utensils. This point also brings the discussion back to the thesis that commodification allows the democratic distribution of spirituality. The availability of a whole spectrum of applications of shamoji and shamoji-shapes enables anybody to partake in the spirituality that shamoji are supposed to scoop. Any shamoji-shape can scoop luck, but in the home other physical attributes of shamoji are linked with the creation of social distinctions. We have seen that the materials scoops are made of are considered an important category in the discourse about shamoji. The public rhetoric associates wooden shamoji with rice and the preparation of Japanese-style food as part of a larger discourse about tradition and Japaneseness. This observation explains why elaborate dialogues about the functional, aesthetic or environmental qualities of the wood are used to promote shamoji in souvenir shops on Miyajima (Chapter 4 and 5). However, my material culture study of consumption of shamoji in the domestic arena shows that most of my informants were not particularly concerned with the material shamoji are made of when using them in the kitchen. These days plastic scoops that come for free with rice cookers are primarily used to scoop rice. Still, through its everyday use as a kitchen utensil the shamoji does play a role in the construction of gender roles. The association between shamoji and Japanese housewives as food providers and caretakers is widespread. The fact that the woman in the advertisement holds a giant plastic

shamoji brings home the point that its role as a gendered object is not depended on the material it is made off.

Shamoji can also be found in loci other than the kitchen. A range of shamoji that are not intended to be used as kitchen utensils are placed on the god shelf, hung above the entrance of the house, placed in the decorative alcove or on top of the TV. A plastic scoop that came for free with a rice cooker in a kitchen drawer has different connotations from a giant shamoji made of rare woods placed in the alcove. We have seen that enlarged shamoji made of rare woods with engravings sold as expensive local crafts are mainly purchased by elderly couples (Chapter 5). These crafted objects clearly tune in with a certain status and taste linked with tradition and Japaneseness. By placing them in the decorative alcove people further express the significance they attach to the values these shamoji embody.

The presence of wooden Miyajima shamoji in urban homes is ubiquitous. Most often they are piled in kitchen drawers mixed with a large number of other wooden scoops. An important question that arises is how Miyajima shamoji relate to these shamoji linked through embodied words with other spiritual places? The argument put forward throughout my thesis is that mass production and distribution of Miyajima shamoji did not diminish their power, but increased their fame and the reputation of the island. The fact that Miyajima shamoji are one among many does not necessary mean that they are less authentic or less powerful objects. On the contrary, one possible explanation for the large numbers of shamoji in most kitchens might be that an abundance of shamoji, emblems of plenty, are more powerful than a singular one. This argument supports Kyburz's view that because *engimono* objectify ideas of abundance and plenty, their efficacy is believed to increase with quantity (Kyburz, 1991: 108-9). Of course, another way to look at this is that the commodification of shamoji produced on Miyajima but also at other religious centres has resulted in a kind of inflation effect. The entrance of too many shamoji might have devalued their power. This might explain why some people dispose of them into the bin.

Conclusions

Summary of Arguments

The connection between Miyajima and its shamoji is well established in contemporary Japan. As a matter of fact, it was the expansive fame of the shamoji that brought me to the island in the first place. While conducting a pilot project in urban areas in the Kansai region in 1996, the reoccurring appearance of Miyajima shamoji in people's homes caught my attention. During the course of this thesis, I have traced the trajectories of the Miyajima shamoji from the island to urban homes. I set out to challenge the assumption that mass production and commercial distribution diminishes the spiritual power of objects. My data suggests that the commodification of Miyajima shamoji and their distribution to major cities via multiple distribution networks has enhanced their spirituality, spreading the fame of Miyajima and its shamoji. The conclusion will summarise my overall findings through a discussion of the main anthropological issues that have emerged in each individual chapter.

Chapter 1 argued that, like Gawan canoes (Munn, 1986), shamoji move away from the island to spread the collective fame of Miyajima. I have described processes of religious embodiment and the transference of spiritual power within the Shinto-Buddhist syncretic religious tradition. The power that is thought to be inherent in the Island was successively thought to be materialised in the mountainous landscape, a statue of the Buddhist Deity Benzaiten, the Isukushima Shrine and mobile shamoji. Each of these embodiments of the spirituality in the island is internally and externally endowed with religious agency (Gell, 1998). The large quantities of identical shamoji that leave the island provide evidence for the thesis that the original and the copy constitute each other. Innumerable copies of shamoji increase the renown of their referent, the island, but through their circulation they also expand their own reputation. Contrary to Benjamin's (1969) view, the power of the image is not only retained, but its meaning is also expanded through its appropriation by more people in a variety of ways.

In terms of the overall research questions examined in this thesis, the central point to emerge from Chapter 1 is that the spiritual is considered to be present in all realms of life in Japan. A historical overview of pilgrimage has shown that entertainment and commerce have always been important aspects of religious travel. Moreover, Japanese people often turn to the deities in their search for this-worldly success, wealth and prosperity. Throughout the thesis, I have provided

further evidence for the argument that the spiritual and the material are dialectically related. This study, thereby, complements a number of recent ethnographies that have come to similar conclusions in different cultural contexts, for example Parry (1994) through his examination of Hindu funeral rites in India, Meyer (1998) in reference to prayers for success among Pentecostals in Ghana, and Coleman and Elsner (1998) in noting the playful aspect of pilgrimages in the UK. Other Japanese examples I have discussed are the role of religious institutions in the establishment of a local economy on Miyajima (Chapter 2), the interrelationship between pilgrimage and tourism (Chapter 3), the shopping arcade located in front of the Itsukushima Shrine (Chapter 4), the sales of shamoji at religious institutions and in souvenir shops (Chapter 5) the ritual disposal of auspicious objects that were received from temples and shrines and from commercial enterprises (Chapter 7). Religious professionals are important mediators between the spiritual and material worlds in Japan, but the individual lay person can take the initiative to engage with the Divine on a personal level through a multitude of embodied practices. Mass-produced, cheap and mobile spiritual commodities such as the Miyajima shamoji offer everybody the opportunity to appropriate spirituality in their everyday lives.

In their myth of origin, Miyajima shamoji are constructed as *engimono* of the Deity Benzaiten. This is a particular genre of spiritual commodity that can ensure bonds with certain deities who can help to bring about good fortune. Chapter 2 takes as a starting point the metonymic link created in the myth of origin between Miyajima and shamoji made of sacred trees that grow on the island. I have demonstrated how, due to the scarcity of wood on the island, this process of the transmission of power through sacred wood was replaced by foreign timber authenticated with a stamp with the Chinese characters for 'Miyajima'. The stamp burned into the wood connects each shamoji with its place of origin and distinguishes it from those made elsewhere. Each Miyajima shamoji indexes a bond with the Deity Benzaiten and, by extension, with the island. It follows that the more shamoji are produced and distributed via Miyajima, the more links with the island are created. In recent years, a range of other marks have been added to the surface of Miyajima shamoji. They embody more specific links between shamoji and religious institutions, businesses such as the Miyachû wholesale company, souvenir shops and most recently an individual craftsman on the island.

The huge variety of Miyajima shamoji made nationally available through tourism and wholesale networks enables anybody to partake in the power in the island. In theory, any shamoji carrying

the Miyajima stamp is a Miyajima shamoji. However, the context in which shamoji move away from the island is crucial in determining what people consider authentic. Because Miyachû shamoji on sale in department stores nation-wide can build on the long history of association with Miyajima, plastic versions may be bought as the latest semiotic representation of the island. However, the majority of shamoji distributed within the context of tourism are made of wood. This tunes in with a popular discourse that links wood with tradition and Japaneseness. Chapter 5 shows how some marketing strategies to promote wooden shamoji in souvenir shops draw on the same discourse. Chapter 7 reveals a related rhetoric that links wooden utensils and tableware used in the preparation and consumption of food in the home with a unique Japanese sensitivity. Expensive wooden crafts express taste and status.

Miyajima is a popular tourist destination and Chapter 3 has considered the production and consumption of tourist space on the island. Places in Japan compete in attracting tourists by promoting the uniqueness of the landscape, famous visitors or local products. I have been particularly interested in the way famous places are created by employing the motif of a famous product in the broadest possible variety of applications such as street pavements, advertisement boards, train tickets and menus. The local community on Miyajima has built up its reputation as the authentic shamoji-island by integrating a surplus of shamoji-shapes in the visitors' experiences on the island.

This chapter has challenged two well-established theories that depict tourism either as a search for authentic experiences (MacCannell, 1973) or as a continuation of pilgrimages (Turner and Turner, 1978). Travel, like most Japanese leisure activities, has its origin in religion, but today it is a total socio-economic phenomenon. Miyajima is a sacred place, but through an ethnography of tourists' practices on the island, I have demonstrated that motivation for travelling to the island is complex and diverse. This analysis has further led to new insights into the characteristics of Japanese domestic travel. Because holidays are relatively few, most people take a number of short trips throughout the year. The elderly and schoolchildren mainly travel in organised packaged tours, but a growing number of Japanese travel in small informal groups of relatives, friends or colleagues. Japanese tourists like to visit places that are famous. These may be places well known for their historic fame such as Miyajima, but in recent years those destinations that have managed to appear in the media, or that have become associated with media celebrities, have been the most successful. Most people are not particularly contemplative about sites

visited, but they move swiftly through space while enacting a series of embodied practices. Few people travel alone because sociability is considered to be an important aspect of the trip. People like to chat, laugh, eat, take photographs, ride trains and cable cars, bath, pray and shop with others.

Shopping for souvenirs is a key element of tourism in Japan and Chapters 4 and 5 have focused on the material culture of travel. Chapter 4 has revealed that Japanese tourists buy different souvenirs for themselves and others. Souvenirs are part of the gift economy and many tourists feel responsible for bringing home a large number of gifts in return for previously received items. These are mostly cheap souvenirs that are clearly recognisable as products from those places visited. Food is very popular as a gift because it can be shared with others at home. In Chapter 7, we saw that food is also appreciated because it can be totally consumed and leaves no trace in the home. Gifting souvenirs is not only an obligatory act (Bourdieu, 1979). The kinds of souvenirs people bring home also depends on the specificity of the relationship between the giver and the receiver. Souvenirs people buy for themselves tend to be more expensive and are imbued with particular memories of the trip. Wooden crafts are popular as personal souvenirs because they are expressive of one's taste and status.

A second section of this chapter compares marketing strategies applied in two souvenir shops in the shopping arcade on Miyajima. I have shown that those shops that have personalised the interaction between locals and tourists through the physical structure and the atmosphere of the retail site, the merchandise on sale, and the services provided by female clerks have been most successful. By creating a more personal context of exchange they have managed to combine their own interest with the needs of their customers. This theme continues in Chapter 5 in which I have concentrated on the role of female sales people in mediating knowledge about shamoji to consumers in the shops.

I have demonstrated that shopkeepers advocate particular shamoji and adopt different narratives according to the customers concerned. Discourses about functionality, aesthetics, the environment, luck and celebrity fame connect shamoji with certain types of consumers. Distinctions in types of objects are used to both metaphorically speak to and confirm a social distinction of gender, but they are also applied to many other such distinctions such as age and status. Moreover, customers are not passive recipients of promotional talk; they are active

participants in dynamic, interactive performances in the shops. The talk about certain qualities of shamoji helps people to justify their expenditure but it is also a way to develop a certain connoisseurship and status. Through the purchase of a particular shamoji tourists create subtle distinctions against a background of sameness.

Spirituality and Commodification

Tambiah's (1984) study of Thai amulets has been my main reference point in investigating the impact of commodification on spirituality. If we replace amulets with shamoji, then according to Tambiah 'the more shamoji are produced, the more they are faked, and the more they are purchasable for money, the more they deteriorate' in their mystical power' (Tambiah, 1984: 336). The evidence in this thesis questions this supposedly inverted relationship between commercialisation and sacredness.

If the sheer multitude and diversity of copies of shamoji had created a vulgarisation or dissipation of the spirituality associated with their source, then by the time they had passed through the trajectory of being a tourist object and domestic utensil they would have lost any trace of their spiritual efficacy. This assumed negation between commodified familiar objects and spiritual value relates back to my discussion of the commodification thesis and discourses about taste, authenticity and imitation that developed at the end of the nineteenth century in Europe (Sennett, 1977; Orvell, 1989). The development of the derogative concept of kitsch should also be seen within these developments (Binkeley, 2000: 136). However, mass-produced kitsch objects can also be invested with spiritual power, as demonstrated by the role they play in devotional Catholicism. Only recently has the elaborate ornamentation and realistic detail associated with religious kitsch become perceived as negative because it is too feminine and too rooted in the banalities of everyday life (McDannell, 1995: 170-80). My Japanese case study has also demonstrated that the trivial and the mundane can be a source of spiritual power. Shamoji bridge formal religion and everyday domestic practices because they are tools that channel spirituality into the home. Moreover, their main physical quality, linked with their efficacy, is their shape, invested with agency through homophones of the mundane act of scooping rice (Chapter 6).

The original spirituality associated with the island is embodied in the landscape, and in examples of stable man-made material culture such as statues and in mobile shamoji. I have found that,

throughout their trajectory as tourist souvenir and a domestic utensil, the spirituality imbued in shamoji is adapted to the domestic arena. The home is the place where the majority of the people will naturally take advantage of and relate to shamoji. Chapter 6 indicated that shamoji are supposed to scoop a domestic form of spirituality associated with luck and prosperity. The Japanese concept of luck associated with Buddhist ideas about karmic causality and Taoist astrological concepts plays a significant role in people's everyday lives. It is considered to be a democratic quality in the world that can be appropriated by anyone. The commodification of shamoji, therefore, has not destroyed their spiritual efficacy but has actually transferred it into a medium that becomes available and potent for the population as a whole. In turn, this efficacy reflects back on the fame and power inherent in the island with which shamoji are associated.

The efficacy of shamoji is linked with their shape. Shamoji-shapes scoop rice and invite luck and they thereby transcend the supposed divide between utility and symbolic value. Any shamoji-shape can scoop luck, regardless of the material it is made of and whether or not it is actually employed as a kitchen utensil (Chapter 7). Shamoji with petitions illustrate this point. They are not used in food preparation, but they are considered to scoop the different types of luck written on their head. A second example is enlarged shamoji that are supposed to scoop luck in male spheres of life such as sports, politics and business. This is important to the larger thesis about the impact of the commodification of shamoji in constructing a democratic distribution of spirituality.

Availability of a whole spectrum of applications of shamoji and shamoji-shapes enables anybody to partake in the spirituality that shamoji are supposed to scoop. However, in the home, the material shamoji are made of and their size are employed in creating social distinctions. Moreover, by placing shamoji in certain loci in the home, such as on top of the TV or in the entrance hall, people show that they attach a certain importance to them. This may be their function as a charm to ward off evil, or as a marker of a certain taste or knowledge and appreciation of traditional Japaneseness. In short, the specific relationship shamoji create between Miyajima and the domestic arena is also influenced by contextual considerations such as social hierarchy or gender roles, and style and taste.

In conclusion, because shamoji are mass-produced and circulated, they enter in large numbers into people's homes, where their spiritual power is more accessible (Inglis, 1999: 138). Other

anthropological studies have, similarly, demonstrated that modern technologies such as TV (Goethals, 2000) video (Coleman, 1996) or the Internet (Vasquez and Marquadt, 2000) make religious experiences more accessible because they can be appropriated by an unlimited audience in private at home. These examples also demonstrate that commodification enables more diverse and personal modes of interaction. They show that consumers are active in ascribing their own meanings to artefacts that have been filled with a range of potentialities by their producers and distributors (Pfaffenberger, 1992).

Commodity Chains

As outlined in the introduction, the second literature that my thesis topic draws on is concerned with commodity chains (Fine and Leopold, 1993). This field grew out of more traditional anthropological research that has aimed at reconstructing the biography of commodities while they move through different contexts (Appadurai, 1986; Kopytoff, 1986). Attfield argues that this approach

acknowledges the physical object in all its materiality and encompasses the work of design, making, distributing, consuming, using, discarding, recycling and so on. But above all it focuses on how things have gone through all those stages as part of the mediation process between people and the physical world at different stages in their biographies (Attfield, 2000: 3).

The research on commodity chains has primarily paid attention to the system of provisioning of different types of foodstuff (eg. Cook, 1994). Studies about commodities that travel along more irregular paths, such as antiques, so-called failed commodities that never enter the chain, or spiritual commodities that challenge a number of inherent assumptions, have been curiously absent from this research tradition. My study has pointed out that when this approach is applied to less conventional objects, it becomes clear that the connection between production and consumption is not always balanced out.

What does my study about the travels of the shamoji from the island to urban homes contribute to the research about commodity chains? My findings indicate that the production, distribution, marketing and consumption phase of goods can not be perceived as a linear process. Each phase articulates with the others, but is also an independent stage that enables a complex and diverse set of opportunities for the diffusion of meanings and practices. Throughout their biography, objects are filled with potentialities but through their trajectories they also retain a certain kind of independence. I will briefly recapitulate the set of practices surrounding the

shamoji as it moves through the chain and determine those qualities that carry through each phase and unites them.

Shamoji producers distinguish between two types of shamoji based on their mode of production and on the kinds of wood that are used. First, flat board-shaped shamoji are manufactured with machines from cheap woods in large quantities in shamoji factories. These are mainly distributed by Miyachu, the wholesale company, to department stores and supermarkets nation-wide. The second type of shamoji is more expensive because it is made from high quality wood and its shape is smoothed because it is manufactured in smaller numbers by individual craftsmen. The latter group is almost exclusively sold to tourists in souvenir shops on Miyajima, where the distinction made between the above two shamoji is translated into high quality shamoji for daily use and board-shaped prayer shamoji that are not supposed to be used at all.

The producers' wood discourses are diversified and relayed to tourists/consumers by shop clerks who are often their spouses. Depending on the customers concerned, wood is promoted for its hygienic, aesthetic or ecological qualities. Miyachū operates a shop on the island and its products are on sale in most other shops. The wholesale company, therefore, plays an active role in supplying information about the different qualities of woods to consumers. Female shop clerks also draw on personal experiences as housewives in the kitchen to entice customers into making a purchase. Thus, the distribution phase of the shamoji on the island articulates with the end consumption in urban homes. For the promotion of flat board-shaped shamoji personalised with prayers, images or names of celebrities, shop clerks draw on the association between shamoji and the personalised power of the Deity of Benzaiten set out in the myth of origin.

Inhabitants of Miyajima involved in all phases of the biography of the shamoji on the island draw on the Seishin myth in ascribing meaning to the scoops. This story anchors the Miyajima shamoji in history and religious tradition. The official myth links the origin of the Miyajima shamoji with the Divine agency of the deity Benzaiten and establishes the role of the Buddhist monk Seishin as a mediator between both worlds. Moreover, in the myth, the efficacy of the shamoji is associated not only with their wooden materiality but also their shape, which is modelled on Benzaiten's lute. This story is indefinitely reproduced in texts printed on pamphlets, information boards or notes added to shamoji on sale. Moreover, it is also vocally articulated by guides, shopkeepers, hotel personnel and so on.

The consumption phase of the Miyajima shamoji is divided into the interaction between visitors and locals within the context of tourism and the purchase of souvenirs on the island and its final consumption in urban homes. On the island, shamoji are constructed as famous products by bombarding visitors with an excess of shamoji shapes that have a double function. They act as advertisement boards which display a certain kind of information such as a restaurant menu, a signature of a celebrity or a local beer brand, while at the same time they are supposed to lure tourists into spending and customers into making a purchase in the shops. Thus, these shapes are supposed to scoop luck for the local community.

Finally, in urban homes, Miyajima shamoji become much more than what their producers and distributors on Miyajima intended them to become. Some shamoji are employed for scooping rice, but more commonly they are used for frying food or mixing cake dough. Moreover, a large number of wooden scoops are never used in the kitchen at all. My data show that Miyajima shamoji may or may not be turned into significant domestic items. Some people may value their metaphorical importance linked with ideas of plenty and wealth, but their significance in the home may also be associated with the place of their production stamped into the wood or the contexts in which they were received.

My reconstruction of the story of the Miyajima shamoji (Du Gay et. al. , 1997) has demonstrated the complexity of the set of practices and meanings surrounding an object at each vertical stage of the chain (Fine and Leopold, 1993). The production, distribution, marketing and consumption of a particular commodity are connected, but each phase can articulate freely with any of the others. Their relative autonomy is partly possible because of the endurance of the physical properties of the object as it moves through these contexts.

Shamoji and Materiality

The consistency of the material form of the shamoji allows each phase of the chain a certain degree of independence, while at the same time the unity of the whole is also evident in that very physical constancy. This physicality is not a simple attribute of the object concerned. For example, the physical property of the shamoji, which remains constant throughout its journey, is its shape; endowed with agency through words. My study, thereby, indicates that through their

material properties both words and things mediate in the ongoing process of the creation of spiritual values between subject and object (McDannell, 1995; Keane, 1997; Coleman, 2000).

We have seen that the power of shamoji-shapes is endowed through the homophones of action verbs (Chapter 6). These are embodied spoken words that build on the repetition of sounds. The stress is on the exteriority of words and not on the intentionality of people. Throughout the thesis I have given several examples of how written words also bestow material culture with spiritual power. The pictograms for Miyajima, 'the island where the deities reside', are embodied words stamped into the wood of its handle, which enable each shamoji to partake in the power in the island (Chapter 2). The Miyajima stamp is a prime example of how written words are physically attached to material things which are the loci of value. The stamp is another physical property of the shamoji which remains the same throughout the commodity chain all the way into the home (Chapter 7). A second example of powerful written words that I have discussed is the variety of petitions written in calligraphy on the head of the shamoji that people send to the deities. In the East Asian region, aesthetised writing transforms words into powerful visual embodiments (Chapter 6). A last example of how words are anchored in things is the promotional talk of shop clerks that accompanies the sale of shamoji in souvenir shops (Chapter 5). However, this case differs from the previous ones because the power of these embodied words is grounded in the intentionality of the speaker. The link between these words and shamoji is less likely to be retained at a distance from the island.

This thesis has considered the creation of fame as a dialectical process between the object and the subject world. My work is, thereby, firmly situated within the anthropological literature on the circulation of goods and the creation of value (Munn, 1986; Strathern, 1988; Keane, 1997; Coleman, 2000). These literatures re-examine principal dualisms such as the gift versus the commodity, the spiritual versus the economic and the material versus the linguistic. They challenge these supposed dichotomies and suggest instead that powerful dialectical tensions drive the object in its various encounters. This attests to a more fundamental dialectic which does not try to reduce what is happening to subjects and objects or human as against material agency. Gell's recent work (1998), for example, has taken as its starting point a strong critique against subject-object dualism. This kind of approach allows material culture studies more generally to give prime importance to ethnographic observation and analysis rather than to make simple or dualistic analytical terms their focal point.

As an example of these developments in anthropology, my study has looked at the subject-object dualism in Japanese contexts. I have analysed the Japanese material in terms of the latest theoretical debates in material culture and objectification (Keanu, 1997; Gell, 1998; Attfield, 2000; Miller (ed.), forthcoming). In addition, this study has also contributed to recent anthropological bodies of work which deal primarily with Japanese consumption (Skov and Moeran, 1995; Moeran, 1996 and 1997; Goldstein-Gidoni, 1997 and 2001; Clammer, 1997; McVeigh, 2000). However, I have also complemented these studies by focusing on the process of objectification within religion.

We have seen that the majority of shamoji that enter the home are gifts. They may be New Year's gifts, business gifts, gifts from trips, or premium gifts with other purchases (Chapter 7). As such shamoji embody a variety of relationships between people. Through their function as *engimono*, shamoji also create relationships with the deities (Chapter 1). Shamoji imply a wish of good luck for the receiver, but their large numbers in peoples' homes also point at the strains and pressures associated with exchange. Across multiple transactions shamoji circulate and acquire an agency beyond the intentionality of people. The notion of interrelatedness stressed in Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism explains why shamoji have to be treated properly in order to avoid bad luck. Ideally they should be regularly returned to religious institutions where relationships with the deities can be renewed. However, people have also developed strategies to deal with the continuous flow of goods that enter the home.

Shamoji are part of extended social networks that transcend space and time and that consist of human and non-human agents. My thesis has larger consequences for the understanding of the relationship between the subject and the object worlds in Japan. We have seen that until fairly recently Japanese and foreign scholarship has commonly depicted Japan as a society where the group, harmony and consensus is highly valued. The Japanese group model promotes an extreme form of external agency as opposed to the emphasis placed on the internal agency of the individual in Europe and North America. Both models are equally problematic because they presuppose an opposition between the individual and society between the parts and the whole. More recently, Clammer (1995) has proposed the notion of a dialectical self that mediates between interior (individual) and exterior (the whole) while both require each other (Clammer, 1995: 86-7). This is definitely a step in the right direction, but a more appropriate framework to

investigate the dynamics between the individual and society in different cultural contexts is offered by Alfred Gell (Gell, 1998).

In order to supersede the divide between subjectivity and objectivity, Gell attributes both internal and external agency to the individual. Thus, an individual is a 'distributed person', expanding outwards through multiple objectifications (outer self) while remaining firmly located in genealogical relationships that transcend space and time (Gell, 1998:140). The internal self, on the other hand, manifests itself in the form of 'inner strategic intentions grounded in accumulated experience and memory, and the historically produced world 'out there' (ibid. 231). The Japanese individual, similarly, should be seen as multiple, always extending outwards through objectifications in space and time, operating within dynamic, complex changing networks of relationships that simultaneously mould and transcend the self. This thesis has clearly shown that these networks consist of human and non-human agents. The French Philosopher Michel Serres draws an interesting metaphor between the interaction among different rugby players and the ball and the dynamics between the subject and the object world.

The ball is played and the team place themselves in relation to it, not vice versa. As quasi object, the ball is the true subject of the game. It is like a tracer of the relations in the fluctuating collectivity around it. The same analysis is valid for the individual: the clumsy person plays with the ball and makes it gravitate around himself; the mean player imagines himself to be a subject by imagining the ball to be an object [...] the skilled player knows that the ball plays with him or plays him, in such a way that he gravitates around it and fluidly follows the positions it takes, but especially the relations that it spawns (Serres and Latour, 1995: 108).

People's lives, whether in Japan or elsewhere are made up of a series of changing relationships within larger spatio-temporal networks. The Japanese seem more conscious about the networks in which they operate and try to adapt their behaviour accordingly. They are just that bit more skilled in playing the game.

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